The Contentious Politics of Socio-Political Engagement: The Transformation of the Tablighi Jamaat in London

Submitted by Zacharias Peter Pieri to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Ethno-Political Studies, May 2012.

I certify that all material in this thesis that is not my own work has been identified and that no material here has been previously submitted for the award of degree by this, or any other university.

Abstract

The thesis examines the extent to which the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) as an Islamic, theocratic and social movement has negotiated and adapted to the British context, especially London in the post 7/7 period. TJ is the largest Islamic movement in the word and is characterised as an isolationist, disengaged, salvation oriented, apolitical organisation. The London branch of TJ has ambitions to construct a headquarter mosque in London – a project facing opposition across a spectrum of British society, and brandished as the "mega mosque". As a means of ensuring the success of their project, London TJ leaders have embarked on a process of socio-political engagement aiming to demonstrate that the movement has changed its modes of operation, and trying to curtail allegations of radicalisation, after reports of terrorists passing through TJ mosques. Extensive observation research and interviews with TJ leaders, grassroots members and others involved in the on going contestation of the project, explain the adoption of the new strategy from the perspective of an elite and instrumentally aware leadership. In essence how the new strategy has been justified and re-framed, making it acceptable to a wider audience. The Public Inquiry over Enforcement Action of TJ's mosque in Newham allowed for both TJ and opponents to highlight wider issues surrounding TJ and its stance towards engagement and commitment to community cohesion. Engagement may have initially been a tick-box exercise for London TJ leaders, but interacting with the wider community has had a transformative effect. TJ Leaders in London have emerged as a practical minded, demonstrating adaptability to local contexts, ensuring the survival of the movement. The durability of this, given the conservative and revivalist nature of the movement, will be a test of time.

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Glossary

Alim	expert trained in the Islamic sciences
Amal	Action or effort
Amir	leader
Bayan	Islamic sermon
Burkha	a garment worn by some Muslim women - covers the body from head to foot
Burkhini	a garment worn by some Muslim women giving complete covering for the body; used when swimming
Chillah	period of 40 days, of particular significance in Sufism
Dawah	invitation, spreading of the faith
Deen	religion, Islam
Donya	this world, worldliness
Eid	festival
Fatiha	first chapter of the Qur'an
Fatwa	legal opinion
Fazail-E-Amal	"Virtues of Good Deeds", collation of readings used by the TJ
Hadith	sayings or acts ascribed to the Prophet Mohammad
Hajj	the pilgrimage to Mecca
Halal	allowed/permitted
Haq	Truth
Harram	forbidden
Hijra	migration – usually referring to that of Mohammad from Mecca to Medina
Ijtima	congregational gathering, rally

Iman	faith
Inshallah	God willing
Janaat	heaven/paradise
Jahanam	hell
Jahiliyyah	a state of extreme ignorance and disbelief in God
Jamaat	group, community
Jihad	struggle
Kalima	Islamic creed of confession
Madrassa	Muslim school or centre of education, seminary
Markaz	Centre, large mosque
Masjid	a building designated for prayer, mosque
Miswak	tooth-stick, generally procured from trees
Niqab	a cloth which covers the face except the eyes
Pir	'old person', guide, teacher, Sufi master
Purdah	veil, lit. 'curtain'
Sahaba	companions of Prophet Mohammad
Salaf	predecessors, first three generations of Muslims – the 'pious ancestors'
Salat	prayer
Shalwar Kaemeez	baggy trousers and shirt
Shari'a	Islamic law
Shaykh	Sufi spiritual preceptor
Shaytan	devil
Shirk	associationism, polytheism
Shuddhi	lit. 'purification'; Hindu missionary movement
Shura	consultative committee

Tabligh	lit. ‘to communicate’; Islamic missionary work
Ulama	plural of alim
Ummah	the entirety of community of Muslims believers
Yakhim	trust
Zakat	the poor-due, obligatory on all Muslims who can afford it

Abbreviations

BNP	British National Party
CPA	Christian Peoples Alliance
CPO	Compulsory Purchase Order
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GLA	Greater London Authority
HQ	Head Quarters
IHRC	Islamic Human Rights Commission
LBN	London Borough of Newham
LDA	London Development Authority
LTGDC	London Thames Gateway Development Corporation
MCB	Muslim Council of Britain
MINAB	Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
MP	Member of Parliament
MPACUK	Muslim Public Affairs Committee United Kingdom
NC	Newham Concern
NRM(s)	New Religious Movement(s)
NSM(s)	New Social Movement(s)
ODA	Olympics Development Authority
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PM	Prime Minister
PPA	Planning Performance Agreement
PPS1	Planning Policy Statement 1
PR	Public Relations
SMO(s)	Social Movement Organisation(s)
SMT	Social Movement Theory
TJ	Tablighi Jamaat
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WWII	World War II

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1. Introduction

1.1 Key Questions, Themes and Discussions

On 6 July 2005, Great Britain won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games. Crowds thronged the streets of London waving flags, with official parties held in East London's Stratford and centrally in Trafalgar Square. The mood in the capital was one of jubilation and triumph. The very next day, on the morning of 7 July, four bombs were detonated on London's public transport system by Islamic extremists killing 52 people and injuring several hundred more (BBC 2005). The celebrations of the day before were cut short, with the context in Britain being transformed over night. Islam, the religion of the bombers would be securitised and Muslim communities would be viewed with suspicion. It was argued by some that this indicated that Multiculturalism had failed, and that in its place should be an emphasis on social and community cohesion. This new context would have particular ramifications for the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) - an non-engaging, quietist movement wanting to build Britain's largest mosque in the East-end of London and only a short distance from the planned Olympics Stadium.

By situating TJ in the post 7/7 context, this thesis examines the way it has had to adapt as a means of achieving its objective of mosque construction, and as a way of ensuring the survival of the movement in London. The securitisation of Islam has meant that Islamic organisations wishing to make claims on public space can no longer do so from a position of isolationism, but are rather expected to demonstrate that they are open, tolerant and engaged with wider communities. Indeed focusing on this assertion, the central question of the thesis will examine:

"How and why has Tablighi Jamaat decided to engage in London, and to what extent has this had a transformative effect on the way the movement operates?"

TJ as a movement was established in India, in 1926 by Maulana Mohammad Ilyas. It now has a presence in over 165 countries, with over 80 million Muslims worldwide taking part in its activities (Mohammed 2011: 4). Often described as a movement founded by Muslims, for Muslims – a revivalist organisation seeking to reinvigorate the spirit of Islam amongst the grassroots of Muslim communities across the globe – TJ has largely remained apart from the "mainstream' of western societies to which it has expanded (Metcalf 2004). It is a theocratic movement – 'one in which persons endeavour to live according to the dictates of a religious conception of the good that is strict and comprehensive in its range of teachings' (Swaine 2006: 72). At its most intense TJ is fixated on working at reinvigorating Islamic codes of conduct such as correct dress, correct methods for eating and sleeping, and manners as dictated by the *Shari'a*, abstaining from engagement with non-Muslims, and refraining from political activities. It is here that an inherent tension within the thesis emerges for although TJ claim to be apolitical, this thesis focuses on political mobilisation, and specifically TJ's political mobilisation. The perceived non-engaged nature of TJ has come to be viewed as problematic in the community cohesion driven context of the post-9/11 and 7/7 periods and what TJ leaders in London have attempted to negotiate.

TJ is not a monolithic organisation. This thesis will demonstrate how TJ, in fact, varies its modes of operation depending on the contexts in which it finds itself – sometimes varying as much within a country as between countries. In the same way that an effort is made to talk of Muslim communities and not a mythical homogenous Muslim community (Esposito 2010), so too must there be a recognition of diverse Tablighi

communities. TJ narratives often speak of a unified movement: unity in methods and in ideology. This however is rarely the case, with the movement proving able to adapt methods and reinterpret ideology in light of local contexts. The thesis recognises that TJ exists in a number of different forms including TJ as an international movement based in and led from Nizamuddin, TJ as national branches (TJ in Britain, France, Pakistan etc.) and TJ as expressions of local contexts (TJ in London, Dewsbury, Paris etc.). Distinguishing between the different forms of the movement helps to dispel any illusions about the uniformity of the movement, allowing for an exploration of how TJ works and adapts at the local level as well as the extent of coordination and direction from the established hierarchy.

TJ as a movement has tried to avoid interaction with non-Muslims for the majority of its history. In order to gain permission to construct their new mosque however, TJ leaders in London have had to demonstrate otherwise. Since 2005 TJ in London has embarked on a process of socio-political engagement aiming to demonstrate its openness, tolerance and willingness to work with the local authority and wider community to develop a site that would meet their needs as well as benefiting the wider community. A main assertion of the thesis is that whilst TJ ideology may have initially thought of engagement as means to an end, an instrumental strategy to allow the project to progress – London TJ leaders may not have anticipated the transformative effects of sustained interaction with the 'other'. The argument is that through the process of engagement TJ leaders in London have been socialised into the expectations of the planning system allowing them to modify their modes of operation in accordance with these rules. Through sustained interaction with the local authority and wider community, TJ leaders in London have

come to the realisation that if they are to succeed in their ambitions in a liberal democracy, then some modification of their ideologies is also necessary.

In London the TJ's ideology has been reinterpreted to teach that in interacting with non-Muslims, opportunities can emerge for proselytisation. At the same time, interaction has allowed for the 'other' to critique and challenge TJ's ideology, leading the movement at least in London to modify ideologies to resonate with the wider society. Despite this modification being a convenient strategy, if London TJ leaders are held to account on their new claims, and if a sustained interaction is maintained, then there is little reason to doubt that the change could endure. Sustained periods of interaction with the wider society have led to enduring change in a number of Islamist movements – namely de-radicalisation in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Group, Algeria's Islamic Salvation Army and Libya's Islamic Fighting Group (Ashour 2007, 2009). The thesis proposes that if the TJ in London has been able to start a process of change as a result of engaging and interacting with those of different beliefs and ideologies to them (the wider community), then engaging in a constructive way with any isolationist or "problematic" movements may be understood to have the potential for similar transformative effects.

In order to examine the extent to which TJ in London has undergone a process of change, the thesis utilised ethnographic methodological techniques including observation research, interviews, "deep hanging out" and discourse analysis. Around 150 hours were spent observing proceedings at TJ's Markaz Ilyas in London, including the Thursday evening *bayan* gatherings. A further 200 hours were spent with individual Tablighis mainly "hanging out" at Muslim owned cafes, stores and bookshops, allowing for a number of more relaxed conversations. Semi-structured interviews were held with

adherents of the London movement, including two senior members. Interviews also took place with senior planning officials involved in negotiating TJ's construction project, allowing for an informed opinion on the movement's adaptation from a governmental perspective. Interviews further took place with those who oppose TJ and who have sought to characterise the movement as steadfast in its isolationism and inability to engage or integrate.

1.2 Adaptation

The process of adaptation will emerge as a key theme throughout this thesis. It is recognised that Social movements, and indeed all groups and individuals operate in changing environments. To survive and maximise goal attainment, movements have to understand and adapt to such changes (Milliken 1990); they have to be adept at adaptation. It is within North American anthropology that the concept of adaptation in the social sciences took shape in the late 1950s. This was a period during which Julian Steward developed his multi-linear evolution theory proposing that cultures evolve in a distinct manner according to their local environments and contexts (Steward 1955). The theory implicated a cultural ecology, examining cultural adaptations of individuals and groups to surpass the barriers set by their environment (Guille-Escuret, 2007).

Adaptation is defined here as 'a process of change made by a group or population in its interaction with its environment that enhances its survival and continuation' (Barger and Ernesto 1994: 11). The process of change, then, is key to understanding adaptation (Barger 1982). Change in and of itself, however, is not adaptation. The ultimate measure of the adaptive success of change is how much it contributes to the survival and

continuation of a group. A change is most adaptive when it maximises the group's continuation as a distinct unit, furthering its ability to attain its set goals (Barger and Ernesto 1994: 11).

The thesis will argue that there are a number of factors that lead to successful adaptation across different movements with Carrie Wickham and Omar Ashour identifying at least three (Wickham 2004; Ashour 2009). In her study of the adaptation of the Egyptian Wasat Party, Wickham notes that the first factor promoting adaptation is that of strategic calculation (Wickham 2004: 207). Strategic calculation is the process by which movement activists identify actions that need to be taken in a given context in order to enhance goal attainment, even if the action does not fit well with the organisation's ideological standpoint.[1] This is partly a result of political learning –movement leaders can become socialised in to what is expected of them in a given context and begin to operate as such as a means of achieving their goals, even if they do not intend to maintain the new modes of operation in the long term. Second, adaptation can be facilitated through interaction with the "other" – a sequence of social actions between a movement and any social actor which does not belong to the same ideological camp (Ashour 2009: 15). Third, adaptation may be furthered through institutional opportunities and incentives, from any given change within the context a movement operates in (Wickham 2004: 207).

Movement adaptation is often reflected through change in a movement's knowledge bases, which are also embedded in individual members' memories and can be updated

[1] For example, As Przeworski notes that 19th Century European "Socialists entered into bourgeois politics to win elections, to obtain an overwhelming mandate for revolutionary transformation, and to legislate the

through learning (Epple et al. 1991; Hutchins 1991; Simon 1991). With regards to this thesis, it is political learning that is important, as TJ leaders shift from a stance of exclusivity to socio-political engagement. Political learning refers specifically to the process through which individuals or groups 'modify their political beliefs and tactics as a result of crises, frustrations, and dramatic changes in environment' (Wickham 2004: 214). As the thesis will detail in chapters 7 and 8, instrumentally aware TJ leaders in London were able to re-evaluate the movement's situation in Newham in the post 7/7 context, realising that if they were to be successful in their goal of mosque construction, then new strategies would ne needed. Through embarking on the process of engagement TJ leaders became socialised in to the expectations of the planning processes in Britain, learning what was expected of them, and applying fresh strategies based on new knowledge to advance their project. In effect, TJ leaders learned the rules of the system, as well as how to play the system.

Movement leaders and activists use learning as a fundamental action in their response to environmental changes (Theresa et al. 1991; Weick 1984). To adapt successfully, a movement must learn well. Researchers have repeatedly linked effective adaptation to learning (El-Ghobashy 2005; Wickham 2004; Lin and Hui 1997; Sammon et al. 1984). The learning process varies in length form movement to movement, and is successful when implemented through relevant adaptive strategies. As with TJ leaders in London, elites in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood learned from their process of engagement with the 'other' to adapt their behavior to what was expected of them in the Egyptian context. They shifted from a stance of politics of principle, to a politics of responsibility. For both the Brotherhood in Egypt, and TJ in London there has been a necessity to

> 'negotiate with government authorities and elicit the help of professionals and business leaders who did not share their views…required them to cooperate with the leaders of secular opposition parties and nongovernmental organisations and to communicate with local and foreign media outlets' (Wickham 2004: 218-19).

Brotherhood leaders as with TJ leader emerged with higher levels of competence, pragmatism, and professionalism than had been required of them in the past (Wickham 2004: 219).

No matter how much movements change their designs and learn form their experiences in the face of environmental changes, their successful adaptation to contextual change may only be judged through their performance (Huber 1991; Weick 1991). This thesis examines adaptation in terms of how TJ leaders have responded to challenges posed by contextual changes and opposition around their construction project. Whilst it is apparent that TJ leaders have made a concerted effort through a number of different means to show a transformation in their modes of operation, what is also important to consider is the *genuineness* of change. As already argued, the line between a temporary strategic shift in modes of operation and a long lasting transformation are often blurred. To highlight this, Brotherhood Islamists in Egypt initially seized new opportunities for electoral participation:

> Not out of a commitment to democracy, but as a means to further their goal of establishing an Islamic state. But over time, in a manner unanticipated by the Brotherhood's senior leaders, the experience of participation led some of the movement's middle generation activists to reject the Brotherhood's "anti-system" strategies and goals and reinvent themselves as founders of a moderate Islamist party seeking to assist in the building of a democratic civil society (Wickham 2004: 216).

This demonstrates the importance of being adept at negotiating shifting contexts in order to ensure the survival and advancement of a movement, and at the same time also

signifies that engaging in change has the potential to have longer lasting and unexpected transformations.

1.3 The Importance of Engagement

The thesis will focus on the concept of engagement. Engagement in the context of community cohesion has come to dominate the agenda in western democracies as the standard to which all groups in society must adhere to (Cantle 2001; Home-Office 2005; Robinson 2005; Singh 2007; Kalra 2008). Engagement is seen as the basis for good citizenship and has been defined in a number of ways. Michael Schudson argues that engaged citizens are those who 'scan the environment and intervene or get active only when a threat is sensed' (Schudson 1998). Although this does not explain the exact instances when and where individuals or groups may become active within the socio-political sphere, it highlights that one need not be active all the time, but only when the need is felt. Gest defines engagement as anything ranging from voting and jury duty to trade union membership and writing letters of protest to an MP. These qualify because such actions 'represent a commitment to the system and its functioning'; accepting social provisions, however, such as welfare benefits does not qualify because 'consumption does not indicate support or participation as much as it suggests instrumentalism' (Gest 2010: 41). This thesis will take engagement to mean the sustained interaction between two or more groups in a society, and the degree to which they attempt to influence others in that society.

Philip Lewis argues that Muslim communities in the west often go through different stages as part of the process of integration – with engagement having a profound effect

(Lewis 2012). Requests for recognition often cause some form of conflict or contestation – but this contestation should be seen as a positive sign – a sign that both sides are negotiating the acceptance of the other and if managed properly can result in adaptation and integration (Lewis 2011). This is not a one way process, but one in which all sides involved have to recognise that some adjustment is necessary – even if the level of this may vary for each party depending on their position within a given system. It is this process of adaptation that is currently being witnessed with TJ in London, and will be the focus of this thesis.

For Lewis, the first stage is that of being 'caught between nostalgia and alienation'. First generation Muslims in a non-Muslim society are often marked by a separation from the "mainstream" of that society – both as a consequence of simply being new and unsure of the context, and also because of misperceptions of migrants on the part of the host society (Lewis 2012). The second stage sees second generation "migrants" born in the 'host' nation no longer seeing themselves as migrants. They are familiar with the culture, can speak the language and so expect to have some of their needs accommodated by what they regard as their state.[2] This is where the process of engagement is important: second/third generation Muslims may ask for provisions such as *halal* meat in schools, *Shari'a* compliant banking and space for worship in mosques.

1.4 Literature Review

Although literature on all aspects of TJ is increasing, the movement is still understudied and often misunderstood. The last major monograph to have been published on the

[2] This process is also described by Eva Hoffman in her book "Lost in Translation" (Hoffman 1998)

movement in English was Yoginder Sikand's *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at (1920-2000)* (Sikand 2002). This study concluded of the movement in Britain:

> From its phase of consolidation in Britain in the 1960s and the 1970s, the TJ seems to have entered a phase of gradual decline with the emergence of a new generation of British-born Muslims. Many young British Muslims today would seem to find the Tablighi version of Islam outmoded, if not 'un-Islamic'. By making no significant modifications on its methods and approach to suit the exigencies of the British context, the TJ seems to have little hope for any very significant breakthroughs in Britain in the years to come (Sikand 2002: 251).

Over ten years have passed since this publication and much has changed. The movement has grown in popularity, and in London are now in a position to construct an iconic new mosque. The movement has attracted a large youthful and ethnically diverse following, and is now pioneering new methods including community and media engagement (ECORYS 2010). Haq, writing in the 1970s produced a detailed, albeit hagiographical study of the formation of TJ describing it as a movement focused on spirituality and reformation of the self (Haq 1972). A cross-cultural study edited by Muhammad Khalid Masud provides a rich analysis of TJ in its different contexts showing that it is not a homogenous movement as once thought, but rather varies in its approach from country to country (Masud 2000c). Barbara Metcalf has charted the emergence of TJ stemming from Deobandi Islam as well as its early activities (Metcalf 1982) as has Marc Gaborieau (Gaborieau 2000, 2006). Metcalf has continued her interest in the movement, publishing articles and chapters on TJ including its worldview, the role of Tablighi women as well as the movement's understanding of *jihad* (Metcalf 2009, 1993, 2000). With regards to the movement in Britain, other than Sikand, Philip Lewis has charted its development especially in the North of England (Lewis 1994).

Since the publication of the above mentioned literature, dramatic shifts have occurred in the contexts of western societies which have had unprecedented impacts on the way members from these societies view Islamist organisations, as well as the way in which these organisations function. The most important of these contextual turning points were the terrorist attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001, the attacks on Madrid (2004) and London (2005). These attacks led to a situation of fear and securitisation of Islam, further heightened by reactions to the Danish Cartoons of Mohammad (Belien 2005) and the Pope's address on Islam in Regensburg (Volf 2011; Benedict 2006). An additional contextual factor for TJ in London has been London's successful Olympic Bid to host the 2012 Games, which transformed their relatively inconsequential piece of land in the East-end of London to a prime piece of real estate, as well as sparking fears of Islamist terrorism at the Games (DeHanas and Pieri 2011: 799). Policies of multiculturalism were for a time declared as having failed and instead policies on social and community cohesion emphasised as the ideal for integrating communities (Meer 2008; Entzinger 2007; Modood 2007; Singh 2007; Vertovec 2007; Cantle 2006; Home-Office 2005; West 2005; Burnett 2004; Rex and Singh 2003; Alibha-Brown 2001; Kymlicka 2001). No discussion of Islamist movements can now be made without situating them in this context. It is through understanding the context that the thesis will be able to analyse how TJ in Britain is framed and in turn attempts to frame the debates around its goals, ambitions and ultimately itself as a movement.

In the UK, the post 9/11 and 7/7 context has meant that Islamist movements irrespective of their positions on violence have come under increased scrutiny and viewed through the lens of securitisation politics (Saggar 2010). Securitisation is:

> The process of turning a community or issue from a political matter to a threat. It is something deemed to be so concerning that it bypasses normal political debate and becomes an emergency - for example imposing a control order on an individual just in case' they do something wrong (Jenkins 2011).

The thesis recognises the overwhelming tendency to homogenise Muslims in Britain and challenges this. There is no one Muslim community in Britain, rather Muslim communities and within those communities, individual Muslims differ just as much as individuals from other communities. As Lewis writes:

> Not only is Islam used to eclipse other identities, ethnic class or professional, many of which Muslims share with their fellow citizens, but Islam is in danger of being essentialised – reduced to some unchanging essence and pathologised...All too often, journalistic and political commentary on Islam supposes that actual ethnic particularities are subordinate to the aspirational rhetoric of belonging to one, undivided, worldwide community – the umma. The reality is quite different (Lewis 2007)

Indeed, as will be demonstrated through the TJ case study – its communities differ as much with in Britain as they do internationally. In recent years a number of texts have emerged which further challenge the idea of a uniformed Muslim community in Britain and this has started to impact on policy towards Muslim communities (Esposito 2010; ChangeInstitute 2010; Ansari 2009; Modood 2007; Abbas 2005b). There has been a growing demand that Muslims conform to a notion of Britishness – a concept that is still ill defined (Beetham 2008; Bagguley and Hussain 2005; Geaves 2005; BBC 2002) – and which Stuart Croft argues does not include people with a Muslim identity: "the rigid construction of Britishness not only excludes British Muslims but also securitizes them by viewing them as a suspect community" (Croft in Jenkins 2011).

Dietrich Reetz has situated his discussions of TJ within the post-9/11 context, and has provided a detailed analysis of TJ's formation, organisation and methods (Reetz 2006, 2008). Reetz interacts with the ways in which TJ has adapted to the different contexts

showing that the movement is rarely as rigid as portrayed in the past (Reetz 1999, 2006; Reetz and Gugler 2009). DeHanas and Pieri have also situated the London TJ's desire to construct its new mosque in London as part of the post-7/7 and Olympic Games contexts, which have transformed TJ's proposals from a local issue, to one of international prominence (DeHanas and Pieri 2011). Very little however has been said about the ways in which TJ may have undergone a process of evolution as a part of its recent process of engagement as well as the implications of this both for the movement and for society. It is this that the thesis will be analysing.

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis begins through situating the research question in the contexts of the research settings. Chapter 2 considers ethical questions behind researching sensitive community politics as well as the importance of researcher reflexivity in the post-7/7 period and the securitisation of Islam in Britain. The theoretical and practical considerations of the methodological techniques used for data collection and analysis will be explained and justified. The overarching technique has been that of a focused ethnographic case study on the London TJ and their process of engagement as a means of attaining permission to construct their new mosque. As part of this ethnographic case study a blend of techniques were used including participant observation, "deep hanging out", interviews and discourse analysis. This allowed for a triangulation of methods enhancing the nature of the data gathered. Data was transcribed, coded, probed and further coded allowing for a logical analysis, with this being the focus on the second half of the chapter.

Chapter 3 explores the interactions of the London TJ through the lens of Social Movement Theory (SMT) hypothesising that its shift in focus from exclusively the sacred to the profane through the process of engagement has been the main factor in initiating change, from a New Religious Movement (NRM) to more of a religiously inspired social movement. SMT provides important clues to religiously based political activity. The various approaches incorporated under the SMT rubric identify what can be considered 'the central questions that need to be asked in order to account for religion as an idiom of political conflict and offer the potential to treat religiously based movements on their own terms' (Wald et al. 2005: 124). Like the homicide detective, scholars of religion and politics need to understand motive, means and opportunity – 'the motives that draw religious groups into political action, the means that enable the religious to participate effectively, and the opportunities that facilitate their entry into the political system' (Wald et al. 2005: 124). It is the aim of this chapter to do this.

Important will be how TJ as with many other movements, has become adept at identifying opportunities within political structures and 'exploiting' these as a means of furthering its objectives. Movements further engage in framing – that is how they conceptualise themselves and the issues important to them, and then present these in a way resonating with wider communities. Being able to present goals in a way that have some form of significance or resonance, as well as ensuring that there is congruence between stated beliefs and actions is one of the ways in which movements can achieve their goals.

Three main frames are taken into consideration when examining the impact of social and political engagement on the TJ in Britain. The first, at a broad level, has been the canvas

or context, which the 'drama' around the proposed mosque construction is being enacted. The second is concerned with specific narratives that the TJ in London has articulated throughout the process – moving from a movement of piety and Islamic revival to actively engaging in the political process and discourses of multiculturalism, social and community cohesion. The third is concerned with the plethora of opposing narratives that have been espoused against TJ's vision both for society and specifically the mosque – these range from the organised opposition of Alan Craig to online petitions against the mosque on the Downing Street website. The latter two frames are about performance and consumption in light of the first and all-important frame of context.

The goal of the 4th chapter is to examine the inception of TJ as a movement in colonial India's socio-political milieu. It is through understanding this context, and TJ's interpretation of it, that will help unravel the impact it has had on the movement today. As a movement that is aware of its history and traditions, TJ has drawn many of its myths memories and symbols from this period, applying these to similar contextual circumstances in the west today. The movement's ideology moreover has always been, and continues to be, based on the "Six-Points of Tabligh" and as such a firm comprehension of these will be integral to properly conceptualising the movement.

Above all the chapter highlights TJ as a missionary movement. Tablighis as with many other missionaries, live in a highly controlled fashion with a seeming total dedication to spreading the truth of their faith. It is this controlled and structured living in the face of what is perceived to be a society in free-fall that will have contributed to the continued growth of the organisation amongst Muslims in Britain. The chapter will also consider the importance of the movement's leadership structures as these ultimately have the

capacity to determine the success or failures of the movement. Whilst TJ in London maintains close links with the global movement in Nizamuddin, it has also forged a level of independence as shown in its efforts to engage in the political process, underlying the ability of TJ to think globally yet act locally. This is important because as Jacobson notes, 'movements can generate an Achilles heal when they do not integrate the local concerns intricately into their universal symbolic webbing' (Jacobson 2011). Any movement that fails to integrate local concerns is unlikely to have a message that resonates with the local population, thus less likely to succeed.

Chapter 5 builds on the previous chapters through exploring the establishment of TJ in Britain, and particularly the Tablighi community in London. The chapter places this establishment into the wider context of Muslim communities' development in Britain, allowing for a consideration of the way in which intra-Muslim community relations may work. It will outline the expansion of the movement from the subcontinent to Britain (and the west), the circumstances under which the first Tablighi communities were formed here, as well as the early goals of the movement in Britain will be outlined. This allows for an analysis of past and present Tablighi goals and the degree to which these may have changed over time. It will also examine the establishment of a Tablighi community at Dewsbury in Yorkshire – the current headquarters of the British and European TJ at Markazi Masjid.

Bearing in mind the continued contextual importance of social and community cohesion, the chapter will explore allegations that the area in immediate proximity to the Tablighi's Dewsbury mosque has become homogenously Tablighi dominated and as such a 'parallel' community (Hussain 2006). The importance of this lies in assertions that it

captures the isolationist nature of the movement and foretells of what could happen to the area around the proposed mosque in London. This demands an exploration of the debates around the capacity of mosque architecture or certain movements to change the demographics of an area. It is hoped that this chapter will bring many of the historical debates surrounding TJ up-to-date so that the ensuing chapters may focus on TJ's current aims and objectives in London.

Chapter 6 has two aims. The first is to present TJ as a movement in London from the perspective of its leaders, adherents and discourses. The second is to discuss TJ's goal of mosque construction through the ideology and claims-making of the London branch as presented to (and discussed by) its grassroots members during the Thursday evening *bayans* at the Markaz Ilyas. This will allow for an understanding of how elite and instrumentally aware leaders have framed the movement's claims-making at relatively private events, how these were interpreted by the grassroots, and the extent to which these correlate with what the movement has postulated in public. In essence TJ is a movement whose main concern is, and always has been the eternal – that is, working towards the complete re-orientation of life to the exact imitation of Mohammad and the early generation of Muslims - 'living like the pious ancestors' as a means of salvation (Reetz 2003; Gugler 2007).

The movement has taught its followers to abstain from the affairs of this world, to focus on piety, self-reformation, invitation of others to Islam and ultimately salvation. In the context of modern Britain, with concerns over Islamic terrorism and the pressures surrounding its proposals the movement has had to change, to become attune to the 'here', that is to become involved in the processes of engaging with the secular, which

until 2005 it had largely avoided. The London TJ will be portrayed as a movement caught between "here and eternity", a movement aiming for the eternal, but having to adapt to the practicalities of new contexts in which they must also negotiate the here.

Chapter 7 identifies how and why TJ began the process of engagement. Since 2005 London TJ leaders gradually realised that in order to achieve their goals, an embarkation on the process of engagement with the local authority and wider communities was necessary. The chapter analyses the ways in which TJ leaders sought to adapt to and engage with the state and other institutions, in order to advance their goals and objectives, and the effect engagement had on the movement. Whilst the debates examined here are specific to the London TJ and their attempts at mosque construction, many of the methods and tactics used by TJ leaders are also typical of those used by other Muslim groups as well as SMOs in general. One need only look at the attempts of Muslim organisations to construct mosques in New York (Rabinowitz 2010), Cologne (Reimann 2007), Berlin (Jonker 2005) and Paris (Cesari 2005) to see the similarities. These include attempts at entering the arena of social and political engagement, public relations, and actively demonstrating that Islam is not a religion of violence, but that Muslims seek to live in peace with their neighbours and value the freedom to practice their faith just as any other faith group in society.

Since 2005 TJ leaders in London accepted that if they are to succeed in their goals in Britain, then a strategy of engaging by the rules and expectations of western political systems are paramount. Through engaging, Muslim groups have started to be socialised into the expectations of western systems and have come to understand that adopting a strategy of practicality and finding compromise is important. It is Tablighi leaders in

London want a recognition of their faith in the public space, even if it comes at the cost of contention, that have propelled the project, and as a consequence initiated the process of the movement's adaptation.

Chapter 8 reconsiders the research question in light the 10-day Public Inquiry into the 'Appeal Against Enforcement Action over the Abbey Mills Riverine Centre' by TJ. Through analysing how the London TJ interacted at the Inquiry – in terms of direct engagement through giving evidence, and through responding to evidence from the different participating parties, the chapter examines ways in which organisations such as TJ become adept at adapting to new norms and local circumstances. It is this ability to adapt to local circumstances that is one of the key ways TJ will have to rely on if it is to continue in its survival and expansion in the UK, whilst also attempting to remain as faithful as possible to the original doctrines of the movement.

The London TJ have demonstrated their adaptability through showing they have understood what local authorities and planning inspectors want with regards to planning policy (even if the intention to implement this is not there) and that they are working towards that. On a different level they have had to reassure their adherents that they are remaining faithful to the fundamental tenants of the faith, which can seem contradictory to the aims and objectives of the local authority and planning bodies. If a movement is able to do both of these in a meaningful way, then they are likely to succeed in their objectives – TJ has tried to do this throughout the Public Inquiry process, and indeed since 2005 when the plans for the so called 'mega-mosque' came to the public forefront.

The issues that have dominated the Inquiry as well as the wider process related to planning: noise, traffic, employment and sustainability, with the more recent concepts of social and community cohesion also entering into the equation. Above all however, the process has questioned whether TJ in London are a movement that can adequately engage and follow a process of community partnership. This questions the suitability of TJ as an Islamic organisation being trusted with a landmark project in a post-7/7 Britain. It is the juxtaposition between adapting to playing by the rules of a liberal, secular state and the belief that the only way of achieving one's goals is in reality through living-out an authentic way of life that TJ have had to negotiate. It is the way in which TJ in London has tried to reconcile the two that will be of main interest to this thesis.

The thesis concludes by arguing TJ is a movement that is adept at adaptation. Drawing on, and reframing its traditions, in order to resonate with the wider community the movement in London has sought to prove that it is willing and able to "play by the rules of the game". As with all rational actors, the London TJ has emerged as a practical organisation, a movement that has put its survival and expansion before all else. Through engagement, a process TJ has seen as a necessary evil, the movement in London hopes to gain permission to construct its new mosque – an achievement mitigating many of the problematic features of engaging with the secular. At the same time, however, engagement is a powerful process and if held to account, TJ may have no option but to continue in its adaptation.

2. Methodological Framework: An Ethnographic Approach

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical and practical considerations of the methodological techniques used for data collection and analysis in this thesis. Three distinct sections emerge. The first focuses on site selection and its ethnography, ethics and researcher reflexivity; the second on data collection; and the third on data analysis. The chapter describes how research examining how and why TJ engaged in London, and whether this had a transformative effect on the movement there was carried out. The chapter describes through ethnographic techniques, how Islamic revivalist movements such as TJ rationalise problems in the modern world especially when necessary actions may diverge from beliefs, and how these movements adapt to local contexts.

The empirical data gathered was based on extensive observation research, interviews conducted with grass-roots adherents and leaders of TJ in London, as well as a comprehensive reading of primary Tablighi literature. Both the observation research and the interviews focused on the way in which Tablighis in London negotiate the process of adaptation through strongly held religious beliefs, in a context that does not always recognise the validity of those beliefs. An emphasis was also placed on understanding the everyday routines and rituals of Tablighis as a means to comprehending the subjective meanings that members of the movement assign to social processes, including that of moving from a position of relative apartism to engagement as part of the desire to construct the Markaz Ilyas.

A combination of methods were used for data collection as part of the research process. This enabled a triangulation of methods, enhancing the reliability of the findings. Denzin draws a distinction between "within-method" and "between-method" triangulation. The former involves:

> the use of varieties of the same method to investigate a research issue; for example, a self-completion questionnaire might contain two contrasting scales to measure emotional labour. Between-method triangulation involved contrasting research methods, such as a questionnaire and observation (Denzin 1970).

This thesis employed a between-method form of triangulation employing participant observation, interviews, and discourse analysis – with the three sets of data mutually confirming the same instances in which TJ in London have rationalised some form of adaptation in the way the movement functions.

At the forefront of designing the methodology was recognition of the sensitivity of researching Muslim community politics especially in the heightened atmosphere of security and mistrust still prevalent following 9/11, the Madrid bombings, and 7/7 in London. The atmosphere of viewing Muslim community politics through a securitized lens has left many Muslim organisations feeling under surveillance and distrustful of any form of research on them. As such the discussion around researcher reflexivity and the process of ensuring ethical fieldwork will be of paramount importance.

2.2 Selected Sites, Role of the Researcher, Ethics and Reflexivity

2.2.1 Selected Sites

A number of key sites were selected for ethnographic research although the city of London itself has been the main one for much of the ethnography. London was selected as opposed to other cities in Britain for a number of reasons. The first is that this study is concerned with the way in which TJ has adapted their modes of operations to gain planning permission for constructing their new mosque in London. London has been the site where much of the activities and contestations around TJ's proposed mosque have taken place and as such the logical place for the research to commence. London has also been an important research site due to the unique nature of the city in Britain. Due to its status as an international city, a city with "hyper-diversity" (Vetrovec 2007) – London requires a specific form of adaptation by movements operating there. This is not to say that movements and organisations in other parts of Britain do not adapt in different ways in order to advance their objectives, but that the pressures in London are more marked. For example it is unlikely that theocratic communities such as that of TJ found in Dewsbury could emerge in London. It is hoped that through understanding the way in which TJ operates as a movement in London, the findings may be applied to TJ branches and other similar movements in other metropolises such as New York, Paris, Johannesburg and Tokyo.

Within London, the main site for research has been the TJ's regional centre, the Markaz Ilyas. This site was selected for a number of reasons, the most important being this study's interest in the socio-political interactions of TJ within London and especially

with regards to issues over the on going planning permission for the construction of their new mosque. After all, it is because of the desire to construct their new mosque, that TJ in London have embarked on a process of engagement leading to a transformation in the way the movement in London functions. The importance placed on the mosque by TJ themselves further makes it a logical place to begin.

Around 150 hours were spent observing events at this mosque including Friday congregational prayers and the Thursday evening *bayan* gatherings. The mosque was the place where some interviews were conducted, although more neutral settings were preferred. The London Borough of Newham (LBN) as a whole was selected as a research site, especially the areas around Green Street and Upton Park station. This was due to the large and heterogeneous Muslim populations living in this area, with many Tablighis choosing to spend time here. Newham is further noteworthy as the centre of Muslim opposition to TJ's proposed mosque. A further 200 hours were spent in this area mainly "hanging out" at Muslim owned cafes, stores and bookshops. This allowed for a number of more relaxed conversations to be had over a cup of tea with local Muslims on their perceptions of the way in which TJ in London had (or not as the case may be) engaged with local communities, as well as gaining a further understanding of local Muslim politics.[3]

2.2.2 The Markaz Ilyas

The Markaz Ilyas, also popularly termed in the press as the "Mega-Mosque", and known to others as the Abbey Mills Mosque, the London Markaz or the Riverine Centre is

[3] See chapters 5 and 6 in this thesis

situated in the West Ham area of Newham. The mosque, as it is now, is a complex of temporary structures (porter cabins), although eventually if planning permission (which is currently on going) is granted, a "landmark" mosque accommodating up to 12,000 people could be built. The site is an 18-acre plot next to West Ham tube station and only a short distance from the 2012 Olympic Park and Stadium.[4]

(Image 1: Entrance to Masjid Ilyas – copyright Zacharias Pieri 2011)

The mosque as it is has a capacity for 3,000 (male) worshippers – with this usually being reached on the weekly Thursday (*bayan*) gatherings, although only up to 100 on other days of the week, with the exception of Friday congregation prayers where there could be up to 500.[5] During Ramadan the numbers attending the talks are smaller, although more committed to the Tablighi teachings. The mosque attracts worshippers and adherents

[4] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/8465694.stm (accessed: 22/03/10)
[5] These are estimates based from my own observations at the mosque.

from all over the UK, acting as a centre for dispatching missionary groups to other areas of Britain.[6] The Markaz has an Islamic shop where those attending can purchase the group's literature, recorded sermons, prayer beads and religious garments among other things. There is also a kitchen where food is prepared in order to share among the worshippers after prayers or *bayans*. These facilities are important because it means that the mosque is more than just a place of worship, but rather a place where Tablighis and other Muslims can meet to socialise, discuss theological and community matters and partake of a meal in like-minded company. It is this more social atmosphere of the Markaz, which has promoted this research, with participants often conversing with me over one of the post *bayan* meals.

The Mosque is divided into three separate prayer halls, although whenever possible it is encouraged that all worshipers pray at the same time in the main payer hall. The reason for three prayer halls is that they also serve as rooms where translations of the talks and sermons are relayed. In the main prayer hall the Thursday evening speech is given in Urdu – the main language of instruction for Tablighis - with the same speech being relayed in English and Arabic in the other two rooms respectively by a qualified member of the movement. Given that the talks are of central importance to the religious teachings of the movement, every effort is made for the talks to be accurately translated, although not transliterated. Moreover, certain key words (e.g. *amal, iman, haq)* are not translated but relayed in Arabic or Urdu due to the assumption that the majority of those present will have an understanding of the original meanings. On such instances unknown words were discussed with Tablighis after the meeting, ensuring a proper understanding in the correct context.

[6] As part of the time spent at the mosque, I came into contact with Tablighis from as far apart as Plymouth and Inverness, all who had come to London in order to volunteer and be dispatched on *dawah* missions.

The Thursday evening *bayans* allow for visiting national and international Tablighi leaders to speak to the gathered congregations about the articles of the faith. These talks have proven a valuable source of the movement's overarching objectives, albeit in a general manner. As will emerge (chapter 6) the talks follow a similar pattern with the speaker outlining the depravity and ills of society building up to the antidote: the donation of time to go "in the path of Allah". 150 hours (roughly 55 separate sessions) over a period of 18 months were spent attending these talks, followed by further time socialising over a meal in the mosque afterwards. This was enough time to reach a saturation point in the research, meaning that after a given time the talks followed the same pattern with the same points being transmitted – the only difference being that different examples were used to illustrate that same message.

As TJ is a missionary organisation, Tablighi Mosques are not used just for worship, but also as a hub for spreading the Muslim faith as interpreted by the group. Tablighi mosques, including the Markaz Ilyas accommodate *jamaats* where those on missions reside in the mosque for the duration of that *chilla*[7], using the mosque as a basis for going out into the community, to invite Muslim (men) in the locality to listen to the talks. The purpose of inviting other Muslims back to the mosque is to ensure that local Muslims know how to perform their prayers and other Islamic duties in the correct way, and to convince them that they too should give up their time and go out into the community to call other Muslims back to a truer interpretation of Islam. As well as this, the Markaz Ilyas, sends out its own *chillas* to other localities – both in London and further a field to places such as New Zealand and South America.

[7] These are usually small groups of around 6-8 Tablighis who travel to a certain locality and base themselves in the mosque – using the mosque to sleep and eat in while they go out into the local area to invite others to the Muslim faith.

(Image 2: Current site of the Markaz Ilays – the city of London in the background Co. Z. Pieri)

One of the problems sometimes encountered when using ethnographic research methods is the difficulty in gaining open access to the setting one wishes to study. One of the first to discuss this was Evans-Pritchard, who noted that, 'the Neur are expert at sabotaging an inquiry and until one has resided with them for some weeks they steadfastly stultify all efforts to elicit the simplest facts' (Evans-Pritchard 1940). When designing the research outline for this thesis, it was considered that a similar problem could occur when trying to gain access to TJ in Britain as other scholars such as Gilliat-Ray had found it difficult to negotiate access (Gilliat-Ray 2005). Although anyone (male) can theoretically enter a Tablighi mosque, problems may start to arise when a researcher makes it known that s/he is there to observe the movement's composition and interactions. The securitised lens through which Islam and Muslim groups are viewed has not helped, often causing research to flounder due to suspicions of the researcher acting as government agent, spy, or journalist (Shackle 2011). It was fortunate that in the context of this research I was

able to provide academic credentials, have them verified, and vouched for by an existing member of the London TJ. I further benefited by the change in strategy of the London TJ, whose leaders during the period of research were keen to reframe themselves as open and engaged. To have blocked the research would falsify their claim.

2.2.3 Newham: The Green Street Area

The Green Street area of Newham was important for carrying out ethnographic fieldwork, especially in terms of venues for meeting and conducting interviews, catching up on community issues and politics as well as being able to purchase Tablighi literature. Green Street is one of the most ethnically diverse and multicultural areas in the UK with over 400 independent shops and markets stalls representing communities from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Africa and the Caribbean.[8] The street is an example of where different cultures and minorities coexist next to each other in relative harmony. On Green Street there are a number of Muslim bookshops, Islamic dress stores, *halal* cafeterias, *halal* butchers, a Muslim barber, the Green Street Mosque, all of which are next to and intermingled with shops belonging to members of other cultures or ethnic groups. As the area in and around Green Street is so ethnically diverse – with a large proportion of residents stemming from the Deobandi or *Salafi* strand of Islam it is not uncommon to see women walking around in a *burkha* or *niqab*.[9]

[8] http://www.newham.com/page/shopping/green_street/60,10,0,0,0.html (accessed: 25/03/2010)
[9] This author counted 4 women wearing a *burkha* and numerous women wearing a *niqab* when visiting Green Street in June 2009. A key observation is that the *niqab* was almost as popular as a *hijab* in this area.

(Image 3: Halal Butcher: Green Street: Copyright Z. Pieri 2011)

One of the largest of the Islamic stores on Green Street (and where time was spent conversing with different Muslims on their opinions of the TJ's mosque project) is ZamZam. ZamZam is not just a bookshop but also stocks a wide selection of Islamic goods such as incense, Islamic clothing for men, women and children, gives advice on local Muslim amenities, travel advice as well as stocking *halal* foodstuffs. The range of clothing is impressive including full swimwear outfits for women (*burkhinis*). The bookshop element of ZamZam is in a separate room at the back of the shop, where there is also space to pray. Whilst one of the interviewees described ZamZam as catering towards *Salafi* Muslims, there is a large selection of books ranging from the works of Sayid Qutb and Ibn Taymiyyah to books giving advice on conducting relationships in an Islamic manner. From spending time at the shop it becomes clear that it is more than a shop; a place where Muslim men and women can meet to seek out advise on what

Muslim events are occurring in the local community, as well as any issues that have been affecting the community.[10]

At 392 Green Street is another Islamic bookstore called Al Madina. Although smaller than ZamZam, this shop sells a number of items other than books including *Shalwar Kameez* traditionally worn by Pakistani men. This shop caters to the needs of the local Deobandi population, stocking books popular with TJ adherents, as well as leather socks and *miswak* (a twig like toothbrush supposedly used by Mohammad and his companions, and very popular with revivalist Muslims). This store proved useful for meeting Tablighis in a non-mosque related atmosphere, often leading to conversations about Tablighi attitudes to inclusivity and community engagement.

At the heart of Green Street is the Queen's Market - over 160 market stalls and independent shops, offering everything from *halal* meat to exotic spices.[11] There are at least 5 stalls or shops at the market that sell *halal* certified meat all at fairly low prices for London. As well as these *halal* suppliers, there are a number of stalls that import fruit vegetables and spices from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, as well as sweets and delicacies from the sub-continent. Green Street has been the focus of Newham's *Eid* celebrations, with both Muslims and non-Muslims coming out on to Green Street in the night to take part in the festivities. As well as *Eid* celebrations, Green Street has also been the focus of the Borough's celebrations of National Day Pakistan and National Day Bangladesh. That the area has a large Muslim and Tablighi presence was certainly useful in aiding the research – both because it allowed for opportunities to meet with Tablighis

[10] For example I was drawn into a discussion about a campaign in the area to promote greater awareness of *halal* foods in local state schools – an issue which affects Muslim children going to these schools.
[11] http://www.newqueensmarket.co.uk/ (accessed: 25/03/2010)

in a local and comfortable setting for interviews, but also with non-Tablighi Muslims who have opposed the TJ and its mosque construction efforts.

2.2.4 Researcher Reflexivity

In the past, ethnographic research has faced criticism for its so-called 'colonial' or exploitative methods. As already noted, Evans-Pritchard's methods are cited in this respect. Though himself not interested in using data for political means, governments applied what he learnt from his ethnographic observations to organise native raids on the Italians during World War II - as well as helping Britain to govern the Sudan while keeping other powers at bay (Spickard 2002). Edward Said commented that the idea of western researchers feeling a responsibility to record or catalogue 'native' customs is imperialistic, for it implies that only the west has 'progress' while everyone else is stuck in tradition (Said 1989). Such concerns have raised the question of whether Islamic groups and societies, even ones living in the west, can be understood by non-Muslim scholars. For writers such as Wyn Davies, classical anthropology is the child of western colonialism; its subject-matter, questions, methods and assumptions dictated by imperialist agendas with its practitioners coming from elite groupings, thus hampering a true view of the communities being studied (Davies 1985).

This view continues to purport ethnography as biased against Muslim communities, as western discourse is 'secular' seeing religion as a 'human creation; this western view, and the original Christian view of Islam, means that the west cannot understand Muslim civilization' (Tapper 1995). This is a concern that Tablighis have with

regards to academic research, often assuming that the importance of the "truth" of their beliefs will either be ignored or misrepresented.[12] The picture has been further complicated in the post-9/11 and 7/7 contexts with the securitisation of Islam. It is not uncommon for many Muslims today to view research on their communities as biased, seeing Islam as an exceptional religion and Muslims as a problematic segment of the population.[13] Given this context it has been more important than ever to establish conventions of reflexivity and self-awareness.

Working from a more reflexive technique, Spickard notes that ethnographers can no longer be 'invisible recorders of an objective social world' passing on information to 'those in command', but must rethink the "us" studying "them" concept (Spickard 2002). A researcher has to be conscious of his/her role in any given research environment. Denzin furthers this, commenting that the objectives of ethnographic research are not to harm or embarrass individuals or members of a certain group, but to promote knowledge and understanding at the grassroots level of a matter we do not know much about (Denzin 1989). Indeed, historically ethnographic research has evolved from a desire to understand the outlook and ways of life of actual people in the contexts of their everyday lived experiences (Crang and Cook 2007). This is the case if we consider that ethnographic research involves an interaction between researcher and participant, and so where a genuine desire for better understanding is wanted, and where there is a process of reflection and introspection, then research can be very productive for all those involved. Through utilising observational methods, spending time with grassroots Tablighis in London, through interviews and discourse analysis of primary texts, it is hoped that an in depth, contextualised and honest view

[12] Based on several conversations with different Tablighis throughout the course of the research.
[13] Several Muslims who participated in this study discussed such fears before agreeing to take part.

of TJ and its 'politics' of engagement has been attained.

Elements of risk and security were important considerations of the research design and implementation. The safety of participants who took part in what is ultimately a sensitive research area had to be considered. Anonymity was granted to all participants so as to mitigate what Lambert terms 'risks of harm', except in instances where their role was a matter of public record and their consent was forthcoming' (Lambert 2010: 75). Research into a topical subject area such as the TJ and its mosque construction project could have some implications for the overall outcome of the project, especially given the interest in such research from media, local and national branches of government. There has been a responsibility to ensure the research was carried out in an ethical, accurate and honest manner. It is hoped that the use of the ethnographic techniques allowing for a grass-roots approach to be taken, giving voice to people and groups who might previously not had a chance to access research settings will allow for an extra layer of analysis and interpretation.

Further to this, all data gathered as part of this thesis has been stored securely and will be kept as such for a period of three years after the completion of the study, and then disposed of in the appropriate way. All transcripts have been anonymised, whilst the whole research process has adhered to the rules as outlined by the University of Exeter's School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HuSS) Ethics Committee, with approval for the research to commence granted in early 2009.

2.3 Data Collection

2.3.1 Participant Observation

The rationale for an ethnographic approach is that by simply 'being there' – in the social/religious setting of the group – the researcher can come closer to experiencing and understanding the insider's point of view' (Hume and Mulcock 2004). Participant observation began as a refinement of more distant kinds of observation - from the understanding that it was necessary, for example, to join in or at least observe ceremonies, rather than just interviewing participants after the event. It was this desire for a better understanding that opened the gates to experiential and dialogical modes of scholarship that began to move beyond the assumptions of pure objectivity towards a greater recognition of subjective aspects of social research (Harvey 2004). Simply by observing an organisation such as TJ at study or worship, one can gain a deeper understanding of the way it is structured, the type of people it attracts as well as the ideology, politics and patterns of evolution in the group.

Participant observation can be divided into different styles with Junker identifying four. These range from the complete participant (usually a covert study where the researcher becomes a full member of the community to study the group, and without revealing their identity), to the complete observer (where the researcher is open about the research and is more a passive member of the community – there to observe, and not to participate) (Junker 1960). Research can be placed anywhere on the scale, with more than one style being utilised in each research project. In the context of this research, I took an open approach, being a complete observer during times of worship (it would have been dishonest to do otherwise as I am not Muslim). I made the purpose of visits to the

mosque and to the Thursday *bayans* clear to Tablighis engaged on issues relating to the thesis. During the Thursday evening talks, I observed the proceedings from the back of the mosque, later sharing in food and exchange of conversation that followed the meeting.

Participant observation is about obtaining data through 'subjecting yourself, your own personality' to life in the community being studied in order to 'penetrate their circle of response to their social situation (Goffman 1989). In its most basic form, participant observation is a three stage process in which the researcher first gains access to a particular community, second, lives or works among the people under study in order to grasp their world and ways of life, and third, travels back to the academy to make sense of this through writing up an account of that community's "culture" (Crang and Cook 2007). This appears to be a rather balanced process with the time spent back at the academic institution as a period of reflexivity and a chance to review how the research is progressing.

This process of reflexivity has been one of the most important aspects of the observation research undertaken for this thesis. Questions asked as part of the process included those proposed by Gillespie: 'How does the researcher position herself in relation to her subjects and fellow researchers?'; 'Who is speaking for whom or on behalf of whom with what kind of authority?'; 'What kinds of obligation and responsibility does a researcher have towards her research subjects?' and 'How are issues of trust, truth and reciprocity dealt with?' (Gillespie 2006: 913). With relation to TJ in London for example, I had to be mindful as a non-Muslim academic where I fit in to the group dynamics, to recognise that the views of individual Tablighis do not necessarily reflect the official view of the

organisation, not to mention the responsibility of keeping participants fully informed and protected through anonymity.

As well as attending TJ gatherings, I additionally attended the Public Inquiry over the 'Appeal Against Enforcement Action' on the TJ's site by Newham Council, at East Ham Town Hall. This 10 day Inquiry was to adjudicate whether the London TJ would have leave to remain on its current site for a further two years pending the submission of a masterplan for the redevelopment of the site. The importance of attending was to analyse the way in which London TJ leaders interacted with the Inquiry, noting the extent to which they have been socially and politically engaging with the different relevant institutions in order to advance the movement's goals. I made extensive ethnographic notes, aided by audio recordings, when and where permission was granted. This part of the data includes the analysis of the actual examinations, cross-examinations and re-examinations of London TJ leaders, members of their hired team as well as witnesses from the other main parties involved. As well as notes and recordings taken during the formal proceedings of the Inquiry, reference will also be made to a number of conversations I had with a senior London Tablighi (Mr. Solad Mohammed) of the 'Anjuman-E-Islahul Muslimeen of the UK' – that is the body which represents TJ in London and manages the current mosque and buildings on the Abbey Mills site.

2.3.2 Deep Hanging Out

To be a participant in 'culture' implies an immersion of one's self into the routines and everyday rhythms of the community one is observing, a development of interactions with the people who can show and tell the researcher what is 'going on' and assigning

meaning to actions (Wax 1983) [14]. Indeed, in recent sociological and ethnographic studies this has been termed as 'deep hanging out' (Wogan 2004). Although the term 'hanging out' can conjure images of a technique lacking in methodological rigour it is one of the most effective ways of conducting sensitive research. 'Hanging out' with those one is meant to be studying allows for a profound understanding of how people really function within a given context. Venkatesh in his *Gang Leader for a Day* makes the following comment – a comment that a participant made on his ethnographic methodology:

> You shouldn't go around asking them silly questions…With people like us, you should hang out, get to know what they do, how they do it. No one is going to answer questions like that. You need to understand how young people live on the streets (Venkatesh 2008: 21).

Indeed, Whyte in the 1930s had similar experiences remarking that sometimes just through 'hanging out' one can learn the answers to questions that 'I would not even have had the sense to ask if I had been getting my information solely on an interviewing basis' (Whyte 1981). Again it was one of his participants who gave him the following advice:

> Go easy on that 'who', 'what', 'why', 'when', 'where' stuff. You ask those questions, and people will clam up on you. If people accept you, you can just hang around, and you'll learn the answers in the long run without even having to ask the questions (Whyte 1981)

"Hanging out" was invaluable when looking at the extent to which TJ leaders engaged in London, as Tablighi members were far more likely to discuss such matters in more social contexts as opposed to being asked structured questions in a formal interview process. That members of the TJ often cast a disinterested eye towards western social science, regarding social science perspectives as inadequate means of understanding social and natural phenomena (Ali 2006) makes the task of achieving the research objectives through attending Tablighi events in a business suit with clipboard and dictaphone asking questions in a formal manner difficult. According to

[14] An alternative view is that in order to properly be an observer of culture, the researcher should remain detached. See, for example, the work of Fyfe: (Fyfe 1992)

Ali, who carried out field research with the TJ in 2006:

> 'For the TJ modernity is seen quintessentially as a product of western imagination and therefore anything or anyone linked to it are viewed with a sense of apprehension. Modern western thinking, the academy etc. are no exception and are perceived as anti-theology in general, and anti-Islam in particular. As a consequence, the Tablighis see social research as a mode of investigation by the west and its values to ascertain information for the purposes of monitoring and undermining the movement.' (Ali 2006: 90)

With a view to building the movement's new mosque in London, TJ leaders in London have started to adapt their strategy, becoming more open and willing to engage with researchers in order to expel some of the myths surrounding the movement. I made use of 'hanging out' as a technique, often sitting in the mosque talking with Tablighis in an informal manner, not to mention going for numerous cups of tea and meals. This generated a large quantity of data which was written up immediately after the meetings, and which was then used to form or encourage questions in the subsequent interview process.

Robson terms this type of research as 'real world research' whereby a lengthy and meaningful interaction in the context where the individual participants are most comfortable can often lead to the most fruitful results (Robson 2004: 109). Robson, however, also notes that the researcher should be aware that such prolonged interactions with any group of people, can lead to the researcher unconsciously introducing an element of bias to the research through coming to form a bond or some sort of identification with the study group (Robson 2004: 109). It is important, therefore, to again remember the importance of researcher reflexivity.

2.3.3 Interviews

Although observation research is a useful ethnographic tool, simply by itself, it may not provide the full picture or even allow the researcher to fully understand what is going on. Participant observation was supplemented with interviews, expanding on information ascertained from observation, as well as for more in depth questions on issues such as politics, objectives and ideology, which sometimes needed further clarification. Interviews in a number of different forms were used. Twenty-five semi-structured interviews with grassroots members of the London TJ in addition to over fifty guided conversations were had. These interviews were conducted in a relaxed manner with a set of guideline questions oscillating around themes of Tablighi objectives in the UK, community cohesion and engagement. Participants had the opportunity to engage with the questions, criticise the questions, ask questions of their own, as well as make suggestions for further questions that they felt were important.

When interviewing senior members of the London TJ, two of whom were interviewed for this study, a semi-structured interview approach was taken. Whilst there was room for an atmosphere of conversation, interviews were more focused, following specific questions on how the leadership of the organisation in London has approached the subject of community engagement as a means of achieving the group's objectives. There are a number of reasons why only two members of the London leadership were interviewed. The first is due to the amount of pressure on the leadership from government, media, local interest groups etc. for meetings as a result of the prospective plans to construct a new mosque, thus constricting their time. Another reason was that the leadership claim a

unified system of response – so in theory the response of one leader will have been the same as that of another – the "official position".

Further to this, semi-structured and structured interviews were carried out with a number of other individuals, who have had a part to play in the politics of engagement with TJ at the Newham level. These include two senior members of the Council, a senior planning official from the London Thames Gateway Corporation (LTGDC), Alan Craig and members of the 'mega-mosque' opposition group Newham Concern (NC), as well as countless members of Newham's Muslim communities.

Traditionally a greater emphasis has been placed on the validity of structured interviews as the best option in the research context. Sociologists such as Ann Oakley and Michael Agar, however, have been critical of structured interviews, arguing that they put the researcher in an unnatural relationship with those being researched (Oakley 1981). Critical to the unstructured interview are the sorts of questions that are formulated and posed. Spradley highlights three sets of questions that should be utilised, and were as part of this research: 1) descriptive questions allowing informants to provide statements about their activities; 2) structural questions attempting to find out how informants organise their knowledge and; 3) contrast questions allowing informants to discuss the meaning of given situations and allow an opportunity for comparisons to take place between situations and events in the informants' world (Spradley 1979). These questions were used at different points throughout the interview process encouraging the participants to discuss situations in their own terms allowing for a rich set of data and greater chance of the participant using the language of the TJ (Burgess 1984).

2.3.4 Selection of Interviewees

The most appropriate method of data sampling was the snowball method. Snowball sampling, in essence, is a method that relies on participants referring other 'suitable' people to take part in the study. The method yields a sample 'through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest' (Biernacki and Aldorf 1981: 141). The main issue with this technique is that because participants who refer each other may be well acquainted, discussing the research responses amongst themselves, can introduce bias into the research. In the context of a project such as this, where it was difficult to access participants (partly because of the anti-scholastic nature of the movement) snowball sampling allowed access to participants who might otherwise have not felt comfortable taking part in academic research – simply because they knew someone who had already taken part in the process and who could vouch for it. A number of steps were taken to minimise the effect of potential bias. The most important was that a range of TJ members outside the direction of the main informants were approached, resulting in referrals and suggestions for further participants from a number of sources. These included a few TJ members who do not regularly attend the Markaz Ilyas, but rather different mosques in London.

One section of the TJ community in London that I was not able to access were women. Tablighi women are discouraged from attending the mosque, and even in the house are to be segregated from men who are not relatives. Whilst having a representative sample is a good idea, it may not always be the best way to proceed with research. Where the objective is to illicit information rather than with documenting perspective it is best to target people who have the information, and who may be willing to divulge it

(Hammersley and Atkinson 2006: 134). Interviewing female Tablighis would have allowed them to directly interact with assertions made by Tehmina Kazi and members of NC that TJ women are disempowered and segregated from wider communities. TJ women would have been able to explain in their own words how they viewed their role within the organisation. To gain a deeper understanding of the role of women in the organisation, research on the role of women in TJ was consulted (De Feo: 2009; Metcalf: 2000).

Another issue considered was the type of question that should be asked in the interviews. As Burgess comments, ethnographers do not usually decide on the questions before the interview, and not all respondents are asked the same questions, instead the researcher may have a list of topics or issues that would ideally be discussed (Burgess 1984). This was the approach taken when interviewing the grassroots members of the movement. As the aim of the interviews were to find out the extent to which the London TJ has undergone a process of change, highlighting interaction with British institutions and whether this helped TJ leaders achieve their objectives, questions were focused around these themes:

- TJ interaction with the local council
- TJ interaction with the local MP
- TJ relationships and engagement with the Press
- Different roles of TJ leaders and grassroots members with regards community engagement
- Any specific examples of social or political engagement as well as perception of this to the movement and others.

- Discussion of TJ ideology as a means to identifying objectives
- Extent to which it was felt that the TJ in London was going through a process of change.

Questions linked to these broad topics helped reveal data that highlighted Tablighi objectives in the UK. They highlighted cases where there had been interaction and engagement with relevant institutions to further objectives, the role different members in the organisation play in this interaction, as well as whether objectives changed as a result interactions.

2.4 Data Analysis

2.4.1 Types of Data

Due to the ethnographic techniques used as part of this thesis, a wealth of data were gathered. Data emerged in several forms: extensive notes taken whilst on fieldwork, descriptions from observation research and deep hanging out, recordings from the research journal kept throughout the process of field work, transcripts from interviews, proofs of evidence from the Public Inquiry, web-based material from the TJ's and others' websites and of course the primary literature of the TJ. Where permission was granted, I taped interviews on dictaphone before transcribing them. Where this was not possible (this was the case for many of the interviews and conversations), as a rule, these were written up no later than twenty-four hours after the event, but usually within two to three hours. Following Lambert, who in turn used Kenney's method of transcription, I double-checked the accuracy of transcripts through listening to the recordings and reading the transcript at the same time, stopping to consider and reflect inaudible or peculiar

comments (Lambert 2010: 85; Kenney 2008: 143). Each recording was listened to at least three times in order to ensure accuracy.

This not only allowed me to become ever more familiar with the data, but also for an identification of any problematic areas that were then re-discussed with the relevant participants – for example concepts which were not clear or words I was unable to translate. The same cautious approach was also taken with textual sources such as TJ's primary literature bearing in mind that texts must be viewed with in their contextual settings, as well as realising that the same texts can carry different meanings at different times for different people. Every effort was therefore made to ensure that an accurate understanding of the given texts has been reflected in the research, and this was done through discussing the relevance and significance of each of the texts with as many Tablighis as possible.

2.4.2 Discourse Analysis

One of the main ways the sets of data have been analysed has been through discourse and textual analysis. Discourse analysis, is in its most basic form a method of analysing written, spoken, signed language use, or any significant semiotic event. It was useful for this study providing subtle and precise insights to pinpoint the everyday manifestations and displays of social problems in communication and interaction with TJ (Van Dijk 1985). It is through discourse analysis that we witness the realisation of the macro-sociological patterns that characterise groups, movements and societies. This approach was further taken as language can not be viewed as a mere channel through which information about behaviour or facts about the world are communicated, but rather as a

vehicle that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world (Phillips 2002). This was best characterised through the Thursday *bayans,* but also reinforced when speaking with participants.

As part of the discourse analysis there was a focus on different sources, all of which have shed light on the objectives of TJ and the extent to which TJ leaders in London have engaged socially and politically in order to achieve their objectives. A focus was placed on an analysis of the primary literature of TJ – The *Fazail-E-Amal* - the text that every Tablighi is encouraged to read from and contemplate on a daily basis. Whilst the *Fazail-E-Amal* may not give an up-to-date account of current Tablighi objectives in the UK, it allows for an insight on the movement's core official ideologies, which is a good place to begin. Through analysing the transcripts of the Thursday *bayans* it was further evident that the *Fazail-E-Amal* has acquired a new significance (or even interpretation) through the attempt of leaders to apply its teachings to the context of community politics in London. This highlights that texts do not always speak for themselves, rather acquiring significance when placed in a given context (Burnham 2004: 188). It is through this analysis that certain transformations in the London TJ were detected, and which will be highlighted in later chapters.

Discourse analysis was carried out on the speeches and writings of leading Tablighi ideologues. Whilst these speeches were read and re-read carefully coding the content along the way, a specific focus was given to any discussion of community engagement that was present. Through comparing speeches and writings of leaders past and present, a framework for detecting any form of evolution in the movement was put in place. Though TJ claims not to have any official literature of its own, this is not wholly the

case. Many Tablighis informed me of literature published by senior Tablighis, as well as to literature on sale in Tablighi bookshops which they are encouraged to read and interact with. Further to this, a number of participants also alerted me to the most recent speeches made by TJ leaders such as Tariq Jameel, which they said were amongst the most influential in the (global) movement at this time.

Of importance were the extensive proofs of written evidence submitted to the Public Inquiry by the different represented parties. The submission by the London TJ included a statement of evidence by Solad Mohammed – a senior member, Karen Jones of Cushman and Wakefield (now at CgMs), who is lead consultant to the TJ on the development of the current site, as well as a number of other witnesses each focusing on different aspects of the planning process: traffic, sustainability and environmental impact as well as employability. These submissions collectively run into the thousands of pages, providing details of how the London TJ has sought to engage with local institutions such as the LBN and various planning bodies over the current buildings on the site as well as over the proposed construction of a new and "iconic" mosque. To supplement this, written submissions and proofs of evidence were also made to the Inquiry by the LBN, as well as Newham Concern. Of further value have been the written submitted rebuttals from each of the registered parties – this was the process where by each party, after having read the submitted proofs of evidence of the other parties, were allowed to submit further submissions directly engaging, refuting and clarify claims previously made in former proofs. This allowed for a specific analysis of how TJ representatives (and other parties) directly engaged with the Inquiry – which itself was attempting to gage the extent of the change in TJ, including its commitment to the process of engagement.

The TJ in London had in 2007/8 launched a website aimed at informing the general public, media and policy makers of the core aims and ideology of the group, and to specifically engage the community in a discourse over the proposed plans for the new mosque presenting the movement in a new light. An analysis of the discourse on this website was paramount to understanding recent developments in the objectives of the London TJ, as well as seeing the extent to which the group claims to have engaged with the different public institutions in the UK in order to further objectives. At one point, TJ representatives had been involved in an online media battle with NC which had launched www.megamosquenothanks.com, a website dedicated to highlighting the inconsistencies and problems with the Tablighi proposal. The contents of this website was also analysed.

A discourse analysis of the literature of those who oppose the "mega-mosque" was carried out and included a number of Muslim organisations that opposed Tablighi plans on the grounds that TJ has not been an engaged group in Britain. Whilst an analysis of this literature has added an extra layer to the research it was not dwelt on extensively - the main purpose of the research was to look at the issues from the perspective of the London TJ. Finally attention was paid to an analysis of media reports that have specifically focused on the Tablighi 'mega-mosque project'.

2.4.3 Theories of Discourse

Discourse theory assumes that all objects are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules, and investigates the way in which social particles articulate and contest the discourses that constitute social reality (Howarth 2000). Discourse takes its lead from interpretive methods of social inquiry, in

which emphasis is placed on understanding and explaining the emergence and logic of discourses and the socially constructed identities they confer upon social agents (Feyerabend 1975).[15] Since discourse frames and constrains any given ideology, it offers a unique picture of how political/social reality can be manipulated by the groups to enhance the image they wish to portray, yet at the same time could also be utilised by others to erode or expose the 'true' identity of a group. (Burnham 2004). Some theorists compare discourse with ideology, for example Roger Fowler comments that,

> Discourse is speech or writing seen from the point of view of the beliefs, values and categories which it embodies; these beliefs etc. constitute a way of looking at the world, an organisation or representation of experience – 'ideology' in the neutral non-pejorative sense. Different modes of discourse encode different representations of experience; and the source of these representations is the communicative context within which the discourse is embedded (cited in Hawthorn 1992: 48).

In essence discourse points to the fact that social institutions produce specific ways of talking about certain areas or modes of social life, which are related to the place and nature of the given institution (Kress 1985). That is, in relation to certain areas of social life that are of particular significance to a social institution, it will produce a set of statements about that area that will define, describe, delimit and circumscribe what is possible and impossible to say with respect to it, and how it is to be talked about (Foucault 1971). It is only though understanding and interacting with this discourse that one will be able to understand the group or organisation being studied. This is true for TJ, as members of the organisation will be familiar with group discourse towards the "mega-mosque", or any other set of issues, and it is through familiarising this discourse that the researcher can begin to understand the mosque project from the Tablighi perspective.

[15] This, however, does not entail an anything goes approach to the generation and evaluation of empirical evidence made in the name of discourse.

The ethnographic approach to discourse analysis is based on the assumption that speech is rule-governed behaviour and that it is the task of the researcher to deduce the rules through observations, interviews and analysis of texts. The researcher should have concerns for the way in which the participants themselves see their actions as well as for a culture-specific definition of the activities or some of their aspects being studied (Duranti 1985). The purpose of the research is not just to get 'behind' the discourse and find out what people really mean, but rather to understand that reality can never be truly reached outside discourses and so it is discourse itself that should be the object of analysis (Phillips 2002). The focus of the approach centres on how social organisation is produced through speech and interaction, with the researcher analysing people's conversations and as manifestations of the world that the participants themselves have created (see for example: Antaki 1994). This is important as it allows an analysis of how Tabligh leaders have negotiated the process of adaptation through discourse.

Discourse analysis was undertaken with a number of objectives in mind. The first objective was to examine the extent to which TJ leaders/members utilised the government's discourse on multiculturalism, community cohesion and inclusivity to further their planning application for the new mosque. Secondly, to examine whether this differs from the private discourse of the group and as such marking out what Kubal has called a front-region/back-region dichotomy (Kubal 1998). Thirdly, the extent to which engagement and interaction with the wider community and political process has precipitated some change or transformation in the TJ as a movement in London. In the Foucaldian view, given that there are always a number of discourses surrounding a particular event (for example the construction of a mega-mosque) each offering an alternative perspective and different possibilities for action, it follows that the 'dominant

discourse is always subject to contestation and resistance' (Burr 1995). However 'powerful' discourse could also help to modify the resisting discourse and thus having an impact on the way the event will be socially constructed.

2.4.4 Coding of Data

All primary data was analytically organised after meticulous reading and re-reading, line by line, 'inductively coding the documents according to themes and concepts', both those already identified before and during the fieldwork process and those that emerged from the data (Lambert 2010: 86; Kenney 2008: 144). As Coffey and Atkinson note, coding is particularly useful for linking different segments or instances in the data, then bringing these 'fragments together to create categories of data that we define as having some common property or element' (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 27). This in turn links the selected fragments of data to an overreaching concept or set of concepts. Coding of the data started soon after the first set of primary documents/literature, pertaining to TJ were read. This was because the first sets of data can 'serve as the foundation for further data collection and analysis' (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 163). Whilst a program such as *NVivo* could have been used to help code and analyse the data, I felt it important to become personally acquainted, manually selecting key themes and concepts and where necessary discussing these with relevant participants in order to gain a different perspective or interpretations. By February 2011, an index containing nineteen categories and twelve sub-categories had been assembled based on patterns arising from the on going research. By the time all the data had been fully analysed the index had been expanded to contain thirty-five categories and forty-nine sub categories. Of course, not all of these were of direct relevance, but those emerging under the headings of "multiculturalism",

"citizenship", "inclusivity", "social cohesion", "salvation", "immorality", "boundaries", "modernity", "*dawah*" etc. have been central.

As Delamont notes, once the data is coded it has to be further interrogated and systematically explored in order to generate meaning (Delamont 1992). This was achieved through grouping relevant data for each of the categories together so that they could be better mapped, easily read, compared chronologically as well as thematically and viewed in an accessible way. Another way the data sets were interrogated and probed as part of the analytical process was through splitting each category into sub-sections allowing for a deeper and more meaningful comprehension of the material. Having said this, there were instances where data did not fit into any code or thematic overview, and this data has been just as important as the data that could be coded. Once the data was coded, compared, cross-examined and patterns, themes, contradictions or paradoxes emerged, the task of making some generalisations or theorisations from the data began. As this thesis has mainly focused around a case-study, that of the TJ in London, the data is most applicable to this group. This is not to say however, that the data cannot be used more widely relate to TJ as a broader movement, nor indeed to other Islamist groups in the Britain and the west. As Gerring and others demonstrate, case studies have the capacity to generate data that is holistic, rich, rigorous, contextually sensitive and above all applicable to broader areas (Gerring 2006; Yin 2003).

The data was re-examined in its entirety during the writing-up stage, again returning to the coded themes in order to extract representative statements – a process which Lambert notes demands 'ongoing reflection on what the participants...said and how their recorded thoughts related to the research question (Lambert 2010: 87). Whilst doing this, any

evidence that challenged or cast doubt on the established findings, or which suggested new connections among the different themes were actively sought for. This not only helped me to become more immersed in the data, but also allowed for a further period of reflection on the main themes and findings of the research.

Ethnographic qualitative research has been a powerful means of investigating the complexities of the inner workings of TJ in Britain, and the way London TJ leaders have started to negotiate a process of adaptation for the movement there. A combination of observation research, interviews and discourse analysis have allowed for an in depth understanding of how Tablighi leaders and activists in London construct their own social world and make sense of everyday life around them (Ali 2006: 102). As Mason states:

> Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses, or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate (Mason 2002: 1).

Discussions of ethical and methodological issues around conducting research on a sensitive topic have highlighted the importance of researcher reflexivity – a concept that remains key throughout the thesis. As well as the importance of reflexivity and reflection, discussions of case studies, data collection and analysis contain the practical and theoretical considerations that inform an analysis of, how and why the London TJ decided to embark on a process of adaptation, and the extent to which this has had a transformative effect on its modes of operation.

3. Theoretical Framework: The Tablighi Jamaat and Social Movement Theory

3.1 Introduction

Tablighi Jamaat is an Islamic and revivalist movement. Its origins are in the Deobandi strand of Islam, and its avowed purpose is to revive and return to the fundamental principles and practices of Islam as depicted in the life of Mohammed and the first three generations of Muslims (Hopwood 1971: 149). Whilst dedicating itself to the pursuance of piety and salvation, the London TJ has been forced to adapt to the more profane demands of engaging with political processes and wider community as a means to further its goal of mosque construction. TJ in London straddles the boundaries between religion and politics. It is the objective of this thesis to understand why London TJ leaders moved from a stance of apartism to engagement, and the extent this has precipitated change in the movement's modes of operation. To do this, the thesis utilises Social Movement Theory (SMT) whose explanatory value 'lies in its ability to help us understand how movements organise and mobilise in a given political context' and explaining why movements may change their strategies (Chandler 2005: 2).

In order to explain the rational for the London TJ's process of engagement and its leaders' stated desire to change, the chapter focuses on a number of key areas. These include discussion of Islamic and revivalist movements, New Religious Movements (NRMs) and Social Movement Organisations (SMOs). The importance of this is to enable an understanding of the nature of TJ as a movement from a theoretical perspective and to allow for an analysis of how such movements negotiate the process of change. The way in which movements mobilise will be of importance, especially in light of responses to repertoires of contentious politics. Contentious politics are defined here as 'the

interaction among challengers, their opponents, interested third parties, the media and more' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 69).

The main contentious episode here is the proposed construction of the London TJ's new mosque and as such the foil through which to analyse the movement's mobilisation strategies. It will be argued that engagement is a form of mobilisation, with the interaction between TJ adherents, their opponents, the media and local government being analysed. Political opportunity structures describe the way movements operate, arguing that strategies may change with openings or closings in the political system. An understanding of framing and frame resonance is key as these demonstrates how TJ is framed and in turn attempts to frame the debate around its project. These concepts provide the basic understanding to how movements organise their discourse in order to maximise impact among target audiences, aiming at mobilising adherents and garnering bystander support. It will be argued that a movement will be successful only in so far as its message can tap into, and ring true with, the core values and everyday experiences of the target audience.

3.2 Religious and New Religious Movements (NRMs)

Islamic religious movements according to Jean Comaroff tend to insist on the historical integrity and continuity of the group in question with this continuity anchored in 'calls for a return to a foundational order of meaning and law – of life, family, ethics, marriage, the sacraments – free of deviations and corruption' (Comaroff 2005: 20). These movements are theocratic in nature, with adherents endeavouring to live according to the 'dictates of a religious conception of the good that is strict and comprehensive in its

range of teachings' (Swaine 2006: 72). This will become increasingly clear in Chapter 6, which demonstrates TJ's belief in the totality of the *Shari'a*, impacting on every action in life. Wallace argues that movements are spurred into existence by a desire to restore the moral order or at least forestall a collapse in the order of society (Wallace 1956: 270). For Tariq Jameel, a senior member of the international Tablighi movement, the purpose of TJ is to restore the moral fabric of society - to rescue Muslims 'from the hands of evil that they are stuck in' and from the "shamelessness" of society.[16]

These movements are revivalist taking their inspiration from a desire to live out their lives on the exact model as that lived by Mohammad and the *salaf* as the ideal way to structure communities (Hopwood 1971: 149). This is an idea that has become more prevalent since the ascendancy of Mohammad Ibn Wahhab's belief that Muslims had become ignorant of Islam and were living in a state akin to *jahiliyya* – that is the state of ignorance prevalent in the pre-Islamic age. For Wahhab it was this return to *jahiliyya* that brought about the decline in Islamic communities – both politically and culturally – since the golden age of Islam, and that the only way to retrieve this past glory was a return to strict reassertion of correct Islamic practice (Meijer 2009a: 4-5).

Although not a Wahhabi movement, TJ follows in this tradition of emphasising the absolute necessity of reorienting life to the exact model of that of Mohammad and the *Salaf*. Lisa Wedeen argues that these claims tend to be politically important because:

> efforts to live a pious life in the context of other people making similar efforts may have transformative effects on the political order, even when seizing state power is not the objective (Wedeen 2008: 192).

[16] From a recording of Tariq Jamil recommended to the interviewer by a participant

TJ aims to transform the lives of its followers hoping that eventually, over a period of time, the whole order of society will be transformed – person-by-person.

Most of the movements, which have come to be known as forming part of the cannon of NRMs, have, according to Eileen Barker, a number of shared characteristics. The majority of these movements were formed:

> 'since the Second World War; and most are religious in the sense that either they offer a religious or philosophical worldview, or they claim to provide the means by which some higher goal such as transcendent knowledge, spiritual enlightenment, self-realisation or "true" development may be obtained' (Barker 1989: 145).

Whilst this definition is broad, the core point is that the term NRM connotes a group that seeks to provide its members with definitive answers to fundamental questions such as the meaning of life. Indeed for TJ the question of life is answered by a profound belief in more than life, that the purpose of human existence is striving for salvation. In this sense TJ is an NRM - although it was not formed after WWII, it only came to prominence as movement after then, and was only introduced into Britain following the immigration of Muslims as part of the reconstruction efforts after the war (Lewis 1994). TJ has been an NRM within Islam, but whilst once a novelty, the movement has gone on to gain such significant numbers that it has become an ingrained part of Muslim communities.

One cannot discuss NRMs without reference to sects and cults. Many of the new "religions" which sprang up in the post war period such as the Unification Church ('Moonies'), the International Society for Krishna Consciousness ('Hare Krishna') and the Children of God, quickly became controversial and accused of brain washing, taking over the lives of their adherents, and separating them from their families (Beckford 1994). The terms 'cult' and 'sect' acquired 'strong pejorative connotations, which in

public and journalistic usage they still retain' (Wilson 1995: 12). The media has often referred to the TJ as a 'sect' in its discussion of the movement, drawing upon long and established negative imagery to frame the movement (Sugden 2007; O'Neill 2007; Hamilton and Gledhill 2010). Even though TJ does not regard itself as a sect, the fact that this discourse is in the public sphere affects the perception of the way it operates, it will be even more important to adequately establish the nature of the group.

Another factor of NRMs is what Gugler has termed their "simplicity": 'they tend to be painted in primary colours without the messy grey areas that older religions have acquired' (Gugler 2008: 3). Wilson agrees, noting that frequently NRMs 'have emphasised the simplicity and accessibility of their teachings' (Wilson 1995: 13). The claim is that the truth is readily available and straightforward and that salvation is congruous with the life circumstances of the group it addresses. This has been the case for the London TJ, whose adherents have found the question of hiring a PR firm to help in their campaign over the construction of their new mosque contentious. Many members see this as an abandonment of the 'truth' that Allah will provide. In embarking on the process of engagement the TJ in London have moved away from the 'primary colours' to a position that has a more nuanced understanding of the way society works.

Barker notes that an NRM, because of its belief in holding the absolute truth:

> may be less ready to adapt to circumstances (or from its point of view compromise). It may be less experienced in dealing with the problems and challenges of the world – and it may have less to lose by not compromising, because it has less of an 'investment' in the 'establishment (Barker 1989: 11).

The significance of Barker's point cannot be overstressed, for in deconstructing the above statement one can find key similarities and differences between NRMs and SMOs.

It is true that traditionally the TJ as a movement has been less ready to adapt to changing circumstances in the belief that following the traditions and methods set down by Ilyas represents the most authentic way of living one's life irrespective of the cultural setting or socio-political milieu. It is here that an understanding of the way TJ members view their history, their myths, memories and symbols becomes important. Based on what members collectively believe to be a correct interpretation of Islamic history reinforced through the teachings of Ilyas, TJ have kept themselves separate from non-Muslims as a means of maintaining their integrity (Metcalf 2004; Sikand 2002).

A number of scholars note the absolute importance of understanding the TJ's sense of history as a means of explaining the movement's behaviour in London today. The TJ's sense of disengagement stems from the context of colonial India where the Deobandi school as a whole, (including the Tablighis) saw withdrawal as a strategy to protect Islam from the secularising influences of western powers (Gilliat-Ray 2005: 15; Geaves 1996: 167; Birt and Lewis 2010). That the effects of western secularisation were of deep concern to the movement in India has only intensified with its expansion to predominantly secular countries such as Britain. The TJ once expanded to Britain had further reason to remain segregated, that being its lack of a stake in the establishment. The fear of the effects of western culture coupled with little or no investment in western states has meant that TJ as a movement have had little to lose in a political sense from not conforming to the expectations of a modern and largely secular society. As such the movement can be seen to represent and exemplify what Barker has defined an NRM.

Even though TJ members believe that the movement possesses the truth, this 'truth' has been compromised through engaging with secular institutions (in London) in an effort to

achieve one of its objectives. This is a significant shift for it brings the London branch of the movement out of the realm of the sacred and into the realm of the profane – a new experience for the TJ in Britain. As part of the process of engagement, London TJ leaders have not only tried to shape views in society about their project, but in turn also started to be shaped by wider societal expectations. Exposed to both their own members who want justification for the change in direction, as well as to the brutishness of the political process, the TJ leadership in London have come to realise that the process of engagement is a two way process, with the effects often shaping both sides. Through wanting to advance their project, London TJ leaders begun the process of investing in the system. If Barker is correct, through investing, TJ leaders will have initiated the process of change. It is the process of engagement and through this investing in the system, albeit on the margins, that has taken the TJ in London from NRM to religiously inspired SMO.

Wallis has argued that there are overlaps between NRMs and SMOs, claiming that NRMs can be defined as a 'sub-class' of SMOs (Wallis 1979: 1). This is based on Wallis's definition of an SMO that also largely encompasses religious movements. SMOs for Wallis are defined as:

> relatively sustained collective efforts to change, maintain, or restore some feature(s) of society or of its members, which employ relatively unistitutionalised means to promote these ends (Wallis 1979: 1).

On this basis, TJ may be seen as both a social movement and a religious movement (which of course it is), yet as will be seen below, the discussion over what constitutes an SMO is more varied than Wallis allows. Similarly Alan Scott points to overlap between NRMs and SMOs, although he terms what is found in the middle as a New Social Movement (NSM). This he defines as being concerned less with 'citizenship, and hence

with political power, than with the cultural sphere, their focus being on values and lifestyles' (Scott 1995: 16).

Feher and Heller comment that this form of NSM which NRMs are a part of 'are primarily social and not directly political in character. Their aim is the mobilisation of civil society, not the seizure of power' (Heller and Feher 1984: 37). Even so, movements concerned with values and lifestyles can still be political, as the way one implements these values can affect the social thus impinging upon the political. TJ adherents claim that the movement is apolitical, purely interested in transforming moral values and bringing lapsed Muslims back into the fold of Islam: 'Tablighi Jamaat...is a non-political and peaceful group' which is interested in 'fellowship, sincerity in our deeds and betterment of our character' (Mohammed 2011: 21). The TJ as such, from their own definition, fit in well to NSMs, which aim to bring about social change through 'the transformation of values, personal identities and symbols' (Scott 1995: 18). This is often achieved through creating alternative patterns of lifestyle as well as reforming individual and collective mind-sets to be attune to the new moral order being propagated.

3.3 Social Movement Theory and Social Movement Organisations (SMOs)

The term 'social movement' according to Charles Tilly is fluid – one that 'analysts, activists and critics remain free to use...as they want' (Tilly 2004: 7). This is not to say, however, that we are unable define or characterise social movements. In some of his earlier works, Tilly defined a social movement as 'a sustained interaction between a specific set of authorities and various spokespersons for a given challenge to those

authorities' (Tilly 1984: 305). Tilly has further argued that social movements, as they emerged, combined three basic elements:

> 1. Campaigns of collective claims on target authorities;
> 2. An array of claim making performances including social purpose associations, public meetings, media statements, and demonstrations;
> 3. Public representations of the cause's worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment (Tilly 2004: 7)

TJ, although not initially conforming to Tilly's three categories (at least in the London context), have since 2005 started to behave accordingly, with the exception of demonstrations. It is the process of engagement with social and political institutions that have facilitated the TJ's move away from the realm of being solely a religious movement to a religiously SMO. This initial phase of engagement as a means to facilitating construction of the proposed new mosque has meant that the London TJ have started to act in accordance with the (unspoken) rules of the British political process. As will be explained in later chapters, the research findings show that this shift in the TJ's activities in London have come as a result of the transformative power of sustained engagement and interaction with British institutions and the wider community.

Social movements, according to Herbert Blumer, are:

> collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in a condition of unrest, and derive their motive power on the one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new scheme or system of living (Blumer 1995: 60).

This however is not specific to SMOs and is something that both religious movements and NRMs share. The key to understanding the differences between social and religious movements is their relationship to the political system in the contexts they operate. TJ emerged from a context of socio-political and religious upheaval in early 20th Century

India, with the goal of creating a true and just Islamic society according to the tenants of the Six Points of Tabligh (Nadwi 2002; Metcalf 2004). TJ as a movement is religious in nature, yet to take its goals to their logical conclusion - that is the desire for an emergence of a new order of life, a way of life that is classified as 'the good society' - can have political outcomes. It is often difficult to separate between the religious and the political in some movements hence the importance of context. It was not until TJ leaders started engaging in Britain, albeit as a means to achieve the goal of mosque construction, that the movement became a SMO proper.

SMOs are not homogenous or monolithic. Blumer has identified three different varieties, although even within these there are differences. There exist general social movements, expressive social movements, and importantly for this thesis, specific social movements. A specific social movement then, is one with a well-defined objective or goal and in effort to reach this goal develops an organisation and structure, essentially making it a society. For Blumer 'it develops a recognised and accepted leadership and a definite membership characterised by a "we-consciousness"' (Blumer 1995: 63). According to this definition, the TJ in its broadest sense, although religious in nature, is also a specific social movement – it has both a clear leadership structure, committed membership and a specific image of an ideal society as well as how to achieve that society.

As with other specific SMOs TJ 'forms a body of traditions, a guiding set of values, a philosophy, sets of rules, and a general body of expectations" (Blumer 1995: 63). TJ claims to follow this same pattern of beliefs and vision of society irrespective of context, maintaining strong connections with the recognised central and local leadership structures. As will emerge in later chapters TJ leaders have been adept at adapting

practices and aims depending on local contexts, and so TJ is not as monolithic as may first appear (Sikand 2002; Braam 2006; Horstmann 2007).

Benford et al. have added a further dimension to the definition of social movements, commenting that they can be described as episodes in which:

> protagonists and antagonists compete to affect audiences' interpretations of power relations in a variety of domains, including those pertaining to religious, political, economic or life style arrangements. Movement and counter movement activists, targets of change, and the media present divergent interpretations of extant and ideal power relations, desiring some audience to accept and act upon their particular presentation as if it were unquestionably real (Benford and Hunt 1992: 38; Gitlin 1980).

This adds the element of SMOs acting within specific socio-political and cultural contexts as well as the fact that SMOs have to interact with other players within that context. Before SMO leaders act, they have to contend with the context in which they find themselves – for example leaders/members of Islamic movements in the west may have to consider that Islamophobia may be an inherent part of the local, national and international contexts. This is important as the context in which movements operate can influence success. It is also important to stress that SMO's interaction with other actors within that context can, over a period of sustained interaction, serve to change the strategies, ideas and objectives of all the actors involved (Ashour 2009). This is something a number of scholars have commented on with regards the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood to adapt and engage depending on the international, national and even local contexts (Leiken and Brooke 2007; El-Ghobashy 2005; Richter 2011).

Some scholars have termed the context in which SMOs operate as 'movement drama' (Thompson 1967; Turner 1974; Benford and Hunt 1992). For them, movement dramas demonstrate to movement activists 'how antagonists have violated cultural norms

regarding the proper use and distribution of power' and that the goal of the movement is to be to cast in a way which will redress the situation (Benford and Hunt 1992; Thompson 1967). SMOs activists identify themselves as the 'protagonists' in the 'drama' – those who have the 'capability of overcoming injustice or solving the problematic situation...They are scripted as the embodiment of good, the negation of all that the antagonists represent' (Benford and Hunt 1992: 41). In this way TJ members see themselves as working to achieve a world that is more just, 'one devoid of any innocent victims, and claim to have the capacity to alter existing power relations for the better' (Benford and Hunt 1992: 41). Whilst the inspiration for such goals may be religious, the outcomes are political (even if the instigators do not see them as such) and as a consequence TJ members subtly blend the religious with the political.

One key common characteristic of the above definitions of social movements is the desire to see change. A problem here, however, is that many groups that are not SMOs also seek change within any given context – for example religious movements, NRMs, interest and lobby groups all seek change in one form or another. There is a risk to being over inclusive with definitions as highlighted by McCarthy and Zald who ask the question, "Is a SMO an interest group?" (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1218) Through responding to this question McCarthy and Zald distinguish between social movements and other political organisations such as interest and lobbying groups. For them, social movements are at 'the margins of the political system', they are less institutionalised than interest groups and the ties with government are fairly loose (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

Other scholars too, have pointed to social movements as being distinguished by their marginal role in the political process – their representing those who have previously been

left out and sometimes having to employ unconventional tactics (Burstein 1999: 8; Tilly 1984: 306; Gamson 1990: 16; Offe 1985). This is true of TJ – a movement whose members have traditionally shunned overt activity in the political sphere, and when they have been involved, for example as part of the process over the construction of their proposed mosque, it has been at the margins of the political system. Offe notes that this position of marginality emerges because social movements usually 'do not have anything to offer in return for any concessions made to their demands' (Offe 1985) – in other words, they are relatively powerless in the face of an organised political establishment.

SMOs can at times act in the same way as NRMs and interest groups, and at times it can be difficult to distinguish between the range of movements. TJ in the British context highlights this complexity. Whilst functioning as a religious movement within Britain's Muslim community, it has also had to adapt itself with regards to pursuing its objective of mosque construction. To do this, TJ in London has gone from specifically focusing on the regeneration and renewal of Islam amongst British Muslims, to developing an understanding of the importance of promoting the construction of the new mosque both at local and national levels in a way that resonates with the wider community.

3.4 Mobilising Movements

One of the most important questions that SMT seeks to answer is that of how movements manage to mobilise their members into some form of action. Contentious episodes such as the proposed construction of the Tablighi "mega-mosque" involve interaction of conflict 'among claims makers, their allies, their opponents, the government, the media, and the mass public; and their rise and fall describe a trajectory of mobilisation and

demobilisation' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 92). By mobilising structures it is meant those agreed upon ways of engaging in collective actions which include particular "tactical repertoires," particular "social movement organizational" forms and "modular social movement repertoires"' (McCarthy 1996:141). Once chosen, activists must successfully frame the mobilising structures as usable and appropriate to the social change tasks to which they will be put. The targets of these framings are 'both internal – adherents and activists of the movement itself – as well as external, including bystanders, opponents and authorities' (McCarthy 1996: 149). For TJ leaders in London, this has involved actively pursuing a strategy of engagement, whereby contentious issues raised about the mosque project have been reframed in ways resonant with the wider community – that the mosque will be a centre for interfaith discussion and of value to the whole community.

Blumer in his analysis of social movements and their mobilisation structures makes a number of observations that are useful for analysing the nature of TJ as a movement. Blumer comments that 'for a movement to begin to gain impetus, it is necessary for people to be jarred loose from their customary ways of thinking and believing, and to have aroused within them new impulses and wishes' (Blumer 1995: 65). Looking at TJ's primary literature (Haq 1972; Nadwi 2002; No'mani 2001), it is apparent Ilyas believed that in order to achieve his ideal Islamic community, the Muslims of his area had to be jarred free from their Hindu ways of thinking and behaviours which they had acquired over many years, re-orientating back to a "true" version of Islam. Identifying a problem and persuading someone to take action over that issue are two different matters. For mobilisation to be successful, the new notion or solution must 'first gain the attention of people; second it must excite them arousing feelings and impulses; and third, it must give

some direction to these impulses and feelings through ideas, suggestions, criticisms, and promises' (Blumer 1995: 65). For Ilyas, his Tablighi form of Islam, was the perfect 'agitator' able to play on myths memories and symbols prevalent in Islamic culture - of heaven and hell, punishments and rewards in order to inspire lapsed Muslims back to Islam. Similarly in the context of London, these same concerns around the correct practice of Islam, is mobilising TJ adherents to act in ways out of their usual character (that is engaging in the political process), because ultimately the new mosque will be a beacon of that correct practice for the community as a whole.

Agitation is a key factor allowing for the mobilisation of a group of people to act in large numbers for the advancement of a certain cause (Morris 2000: 446; Jasper and Poulsen 1995). Although agitation works in different ways for different situations, the one that is of most relevance to this thesis is:

> A situation where people take this mode of life for granted and do not raise questions about it. Thus while the situation is potentially fraught with suffering and protest, the people are marked by inertia. Their views of the situation incline them to accept it; hence the function of the agitation is to lead them to challenge and question their own modes of living (Blumer 1995: 65).

Agitation functions to challenge the prevailing view of a specific situation pointing to instances of injustice and abuse where one may not have seen them before. Similarly Goldstone, Tilly and Tarrow all argue that people who mobilise do so in order to combat threats or risks, often stemming from perceived injustices or grievances (Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 58). For TJ leaders this injustice was initially the prevailing dominance of Hindu culture and religion as the Mughal Empire collapsed in India and later the corruption of an Islamic way of life by western influences (Lewis 2004: 175). This came to be important as Muslims moved to the west – the question of how Muslims are to lead an authentic Muslim life whilst living in the west grew

significant. This was a rallying point around which TJ leaders could organise preaching tours venturing out into the wider community in order to instruct Muslims back to the 'true' version of Islam. This is also a point of mobilisation for the TJ's construction project, as the new mosque will be a beacon of Islam and of "proper" Islamic practice in London, acting as an antidote to the perceived influences of secularisation and westernisation on Muslims in the capital. Indeed, active TJ adherents recall Ilyas' words, and perhaps directly apply these to advancing the project:

> Atheism and apostasy, which is coming hand in hand with the western government and political system...these sources of waywardness will rush like the flood. Therefore do what you can (Mohammad Ilyas in No'mani 2001: 97).

Jasper and Poulsen argue that moral shock is amongst the best agitators in convincing people to mobilise. This is true when 'an event or situation raises such a sense of outrage in people that they become inclined toward political action (Jasper and Poulsen 1995: 498). This thesis highlights the strategy of 'moral shock' as part of the repertoires of action belonging to anti-"mega mosque" movements such as Newham Concern. These groups have sought to characterise the TJ's plans as outrages – a building that will be larger than the largest Christian cathedral in Britain, potentially a place where Islamists could plot to carry out attacks on British soil, not to mention its prominent location next to the 2012 Olympic Stadium (Wynne-Jones 2008).

Although grievances are important for promoting mobilisation, they are not the only element needed. As Wald et al. note, 'grievances are infinite, whereas the number of social movements is finite' (Wald et al. 2005: 128). As well as agitation, morale is important. Morale is based on and yielded by a set of convictions, and in the case of SMOs these are of three kinds. First is a conviction of the rectitude of the purpose of the

movement. This is accompanied by the belief that the attainment of the objectives of the movement will usher in something approaching a millennial state. What is evil, unjust, improper, and wrong will be eradicated with the success of the movement. In this sense the goal is always overvalued. Yet these beliefs yield to the members of a movement a marked confidence in themselves (Blumer 1995: 69). For TJ adherents, the success of the goals of the movement will usher in a new golden age of Islam – as one interviewee put it, 'if we strive to please Allah, and all the Muslims really believe and follow Islam then what will Allah not grant to us?'[17]

A second conviction identified with these beliefs is faith in the ultimate attainment by the movement of its goal. There is believed to be certain inevitability about this since the movement is felt to be a necessary agent for the regeneration of the world. It is regarded as being in line with the higher values of the universe and in this sense as divinely favoured. This highlights the blurred nature of the distinction between the religious and the political in TJ, with the two often merging into one. TJ adherents, however, view the movement's mission as well as its consequences as religious, with leaders having a more complex understanding. This can be observed at any of the London TJ's Thursday evening talks. The talks are centred on the "Six Points of Tabligh" and the inevitability of the movement succeeding – all that is needed is for adherents to fully commit themselves and then change will happen. This concept of every single member being vital for the success of the movement is encapsulated in the principle of the 'hundredth monkey' as outlined by Benford (Benford 1993). The hundredth monkey phenomenon states that 'there is a point at which if only one more person tunes-in to a new awareness, a field is strengthened so that this awareness reaches almost everyone' (Benford 1993: 196).

[17] Interview with TJ member, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London, Thursday 10 December, 2009

Hence there arises the belief that success is inevitable, even though it may only be after a hard struggle.

Finally, there is the belief that the movement is charged with a sacred mission resembling an absolute truth. Together, these convictions serve to give an enduring and unchangeable character to the goals of a movement and in the inevitability of their success (Blumer 1995: 70-71). For TJ adherents, Ilyas may have started their movement, but their perception is that in reality the founding of the movement was through divine inspiration received by Ilyas during *Hajj* (Nadwi 2002: 42). As a consequence, adherents are expected to go as far as laying down their lives for the cause if need be. This does not mean that Tablighi activists are to engage in terrorist activities, but rather that the pursuit of *dawah* should be seen more like a *jihad*. Metcalf states:

> Anyone who dies in the course of a *Tablighi* tour is a *shahid* (a martyr), just as much as someone who dies in a militant jihad...In both forms of jihad the participant will receive exponentially increased rewards for all acts performed. In each, the believer is enjoined to effective action in a world that needs to be changed' (Metcalf 2009: 242).

Although SMOs need not be religious in their outlook or demands for activists to be willing to give their own lives in pursuit of key goals and objectives, divine sanction adds to these movements' transcendent nature (Salehi 1996: 56). In a shared religious community the culture allows 'people to become empowered, they develop the capacity to act in concert' (Leege and Kellstedt 1993: 9-10). The point is captured by Meijer who contends that in a contentious age, Salafism, or movements such as the TJ:

> Transform the humiliated, the downtrodden, disgruntled young people, the discriminated migrant or the politically repressed into a chosen sect that immediately gains privileged access to the Truth. (Meijer 2009a: 13)

Because the emphasis of the TJ, like much of *Salafi* ideology, is focused on doctrinal politics and not politics in the hard sense of the word, the movement has been able to 'empower individuals by providing a universal alternative model of truth and social action' (Meijer 2009a: 13). The real power of these sorts of movements' mobilisational capacity as both Meijer and Adraoui allude to, lies in their ability to morally upstage their opponents – it is the basic power of saying "we are better that you" (Meijer 2009a; Adraoui 2009).

3.5 Political Opportunity Structures

Political opportunity structures refer to those components of SMT that anticipate attempts by movements to influence a given situation to flourish 'when and where openings are provided by members of the polity or by related challengers' (Amenta and Zylan 1995: 199; Tarrow 1998; Morris 2000: 446). Tilly and Tarrow have identified six important elements of political opportunity structures to a given context, which are worthy of some consideration:

1. The multiplicity of independent centres of power within it
2. Its openness to new actors
3. The instability of current political alignments
4. The availability of influential allies or supporters for challengers
5. The extent to which the regime represses or facilitates collective claim making
6. Decisive changes in items 1 to 5

(Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 57)

For Tarrow, rational actors do not usually attack well-fortified opponents when they lack the opportunity to do so. When there are changes, or openings in the political system and processes of participation, for example some sort of shift in any of the above factors, this encourages and provides opportunity for political action that before would not have been

possible (Tarrow 1996: 54). Any sort of change within the political opportunity structure may serve to affect the attractiveness (or not) of different collective action strategies.

Tilly and Tarrow highlight the importance of regimes as major players having the ability to shape the context movements operate in, and as such proficient in influencing the framings, successes and failures of movements themselves. Every regime, they argue, sets limits on what they feel are acceptable forms of claims making and that these limits establish three zones: 'the prescribed, tolerated and forbidden' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 61). This is not so different from Islamist movements themselves who also operate with a similar framework: the prescribed – *halal*, the tolerated – *mubah* and the forbidden – *harram* (Franken 1996). TJ from the perspective of the local authority, is operating within the sphere of tolerated claims making – the goal of movement leaders is to push those claims into the realm of the acceptable and thus making them a reality. Those in opposition to TJ work to push those claims into the 'forbidden', thus stifling the movement.

A relevant example of change in the political context has been the development of multiculturalism under the New Labour government which promoted the idea of Britain being a modern, vibrant, religiously and ethnically diverse nation, a 'cool Britannia' (Kamp 1997). This was an image which many new groups to Britain seized upon both in order to allow a greater integration into 'mainstream' society, and to promote projects which may have previously been regarded as too controversial. The proposed construction TJ's mosque should initially be viewed in light of this context of greater openness to the 'other' in British society, a genuine desire on the part of the government to celebrate Britain's diversity and the acceptance of a permanent 'Balti Britain'

community (Sardar 2008; Khan 2010). With the securitisation of Islam precipitated by 7/7 and leading to a change in the government's thinking from multiculturalism to social and community cohesion, political opportunity structures have become less favourable to the development of a flagship Islamic project in London.

Another aspect of political opportunity theory is the prediction that shifting political alignments and instabilities in the electoral system can create a crack through which movements can enter. As Tilly states, 'the changing fortunes of government and opposition encourage insurgents to try and exercise marginal power and may induce elites to seek support from outside of the polity' (Tarrow 1996: 55). Although this is usually the case, there are circumstances where political stability can also be beneficial to a social movement. With regards to TJ the stability ushered in by the New Labour government and predominantly Labour Newham council between 1997-2005 was beneficial. The emergence of allies able to influence the situation of the movement or gain them access to the corridors of power also helps. For Tarrow:

> 'Allies can act as a friend in court, as guarantors against brutal repression, or as acceptable negotiators on behalf of constituencies which – if left a free hand – might be far more difficult for authorities to deal with' (Tarrow 1996: 55).

This is something that Klandermans has also identified in his proposition of a multi-organisational field in which movements are able to identify their allies and use them to good effect (Klandermans 1992). If multiple independent centres of power exist within a regime, 'the chances increase that at least one power centre will support and certify a set of...claims' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 83). For TJ in London this came in the form of the then London Mayor, Ken Livingston, who supported the project as part of London's multicultural agenda.

SMT explains that movements can be constrained by a number of unexpected challenges. For TJ one of the main challenges has come in the form of allegations of links between the organisation and individuals who have carried out terrorist attacks such as Richard Reid, Jose Padilla and John Lindh (Roul 2009: 110; Alexiev 2005). Whilst TJ leaders have tried to disassociate themselves from such links, the movement has not been helped by the context in which they operate. Whilst the UK has been exposed to a high level of multiculturalism, there are still those who view Britain in the way captured by former Prime Minister, John Major: 'long shadows on cricket grounds, warm beer, green suburbs and old maids cycling to communion in the morning mist' (BBC 2002). TJ and their vision of Britain eventually becoming an Islamic society where men have fistful length beards, women in *purdah,* and the call to prayer emanating from minarets has little resonance here. Counter movements with the specific aim of challenging the original movement also either already exist within a society or can quickly be established. These counter movements can challenge the movement's objectives, attempting to undermine and expose the supposedly flawed nature of the original movement's claims – this has been the aim of Newham Concern.

The growth of technology and our entering into a 'digital age' (Borgman 2007) has revolutionised the way in which movement activists are able to spread and amplify their messages, as well as providing a vast public arena in which to frame and reframe their messages. The movements of the recent "Arab Spring" have been a good example of this, whereby media communications such as Facebook and Twitter were utilised in order to organise and coordinate mass-scale protests. The media can frame movements in a particular way, which may not be to the liking of a movement. Mass media have grown to be perhaps the most important component of political opportunity structure. Winning

media attention is one of the most important strategies for SMO leaders to follow, as the media is the gateway to the public. The media not only reflects public opinion, but it can serve to change and shape public opinion (Infante et al. 2003; Severin and Tankard 2000). Work by Page and Shapiro (Page and Shapiro 1983, 1992) found that changes in public opinion were closely related to the level of media coverage on any given issue. McAdam has commented that in order for an SMO to succeed its leaders must learn how to 'generate media coverage, preferably, but not necessarily, of a positive sort' (McAdam 1996: 339-40).

Indeed if one were to conduct an ethnographic study of virtually any SMO – local or national:

> One would be very likely to uncover a pervasive concern with media coverage among one's subjects. The fact is, most movements spend considerable time and energy in seeking to attract and shape media coverage of their activities. Given the power of the media to influence public awareness and opinion on social issues, this concern is hardly surprising (McAdam 1996: 346).

This is probably one of the most significant reasons as to why TJ leaders in London invested considerable effort and resources in hiring Indigo Public Affairs – a PR company specialising in promoting construction projects, and a well-placed organisation to speak on behalf of the TJ to the secular press.

The media is important because they are able to shift the scale of what a social movement says or does in effect making what is a local concern, a national or international issue. This process is known as an 'upward scale shift' and involves 'coordination of collective action at a higher level than its initiation' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 95). Tilly and Tarrow explain that an upward scale shift is one of the most significant processes in contentious politics:

> It moves contention beyond its local origins, touches on the interests and values of new actors, involves a shift of venue to sites where contention may be more or less successful, and can threaten other actors or entire regimes. (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 95)

If SMO leaders can harness this upward scale shift in the movement's favour, then they may be able to tap into the support of an audience they never imagined. At the same time, however, it could have disastrous consequences for the movement. For example, for TJ, opposition groups were able to harness this process, brandishing the construction of the "mega-mosque" as an issue of national and international importance, especially in light of the 2012 Olympic Games and the proximity of the mosque to the Olympics stadium, highlighting a risk between mosque construction and possible terrorist activities. This campaign was so successful that reporters from the USA and across the globe came to visit the site of the "mega-mosque", and Alan Craig being interviewed on several major US current affairs programmes (Perlez 2007a; Hicks 2009).

The courting of media requires strategies and tactics opposite to those needed to win political standing within established political institutions. The media 'rewards novelty, polemic and confrontation, but institutional politics prizes predictability, moderation, and compromise' (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 288). Seeking both media attention and institutional influence, movement activists face a difficult dilemma of balance, especially if they have not been used to interacting with the media in the past. Governments and decision makers are concerned with what the media has to say on a given issue and this is intensified if an election period is looming. The more persistent the majority favouring a particular policy and the more important the issue is to that majority (as perceived by legislators – often through media and polling), the smaller the direct impact of interest organisations on legislative action. The size of the majority matters to legislators because they want to be sure their actions represent the majority thus retaining their popularity

and positions. Whilst the media can serve as an opportunity outlet for an SMO, it could also be a social movement's greatest challenge acting as a double-edged sword. Tarrow warns that in many cases SMOs must compete with the media, 'which transmit messages that movements must attempt to shape and influence' (Tarrow 1998: 147).

3.6 Framing

One of the most important concepts in SMT is that of framing. Framing explains the way in which movement activists define their ideologies and attach meanings to any given context. Framing was originally developed from the work of Erving Goffman, who defined 'frame' as, 'schemata of interpretation' which can be utilised to enable individuals to 'locate, perceive, identify and label' occurrences they encounter (Goffman 1974: 21). Building on this work, Benford and Snow defined 'frame' as:

> An interpretive schemata that signifies and condenses the world out there but selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action in one's present or past environment' (Snow and Benford 1992: 137).

Framing is therefore concerned with the processes that render meaning to events and occurrences, and thereby 'function to organize experience and guide action' (Benford and Snow 2000: 614; Tannen 1993: 16). Understanding frames with regards to TJ will be important for it is these frames that serve to render significance to certain events such as the contestation over the mosque construction project in order to mobilise adherents into action.

Benford and Snow have identified three core elements of the framing process – these are, 'diagnostic framing', 'prognostic framing' and 'motivational framing' (Benford and

Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988; Benford 1993). It is through the pursuit of these core-framing tasks that movement actors attend to the issues of mobilisation (Benford and Snow 2000: 615; Snow and Benford 1988). Diagnostic framing refers to the identification of a group's main mobilisation agenda, which Gamson and others identify as 'injustice frames' (Gamson 1992a, 1992b; Carroll and Ratner 1996; Capeck 1993). Being able to identify injustice or perceived injustice a group may articulate this injustice in order to mobilise adherents.

Prognostic framing, the second core framing task, involves 'the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan' (Benford and Snow 2000: 616). This core framing task is about taking what has been diagnosed as the problem from the first core framing task, and working towards an effective solution. This is a more complex process than that of 'diagnosis' because movement leaders now have to take into account solutions that have been put forward by other groups and organisations, which may radically differ from that proposed by the movement itself. The London TJ's project exemplifies this, as there have been various suggestions for what could be done with the site. Suggestions range from the site's compulsory purchase to creating a multi-faith peace garden in place of the mosque (Lyle 2008). Movements may face opposition from within as well as from with out. Questions over the effectiveness of the leadership and deviation from traditional strategy and goals may culminate in concerns over whether leaders have 'destroyed our activist group by spending all their energy claims making and not enough energy on recruiting new members' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 76). This is true of TJ, which has been a movement whose members have focused on *dawah* and the reinvigoration of Islam at the grassroots level, putting their trust in Allah to provide. Internal challengers may have questioned the

innovative strategies of political engagement and the hiring of a public relations firm as taking trust from Allah giving it to the profane.

Movement activists have to engage with and possibly refute what others have put forward, as well as having internal discussions about why a certain strategy has been pursued in the hope of maintaining unity and consensus. This part of the 'prognostic' process has also been termed as 'counterframing' (Benford 1987: 75). The important point with counter-framing is that:

> opposing framing activity can affect a movement's own framings; on the one hand by putting movement activists on the defensive, at least temporarily, and, on the other hand, by frequently forcing it to develop and elaborate prognoses more clearly than otherwise might have been the case (Benford and Snow 2000: 617).

The case-study of the "mega-mosque" provides a typical example of counterframing. This is clear when TJ leaders responded to allegations of the mosque being a breeding ground for extremism and ghettoisation (Wynne-Jones 2008), by counterframing the project as furthering multiculturalism and social cohesion in London, and that the mosque would be a place where different faiths could come together in peace to discuss shared concerns and further dialogue (Tablighi-Jamaat 2007). This suggests that leaders of the TJ in London have recognised that they are operating in a context where the 'cultural pluralist masterframe' is highly valued. That is, in western societies the concepts of diversity, acceptance, tolerance and equality are exceptionally important and publicly the only acceptable approach (Berbrier 1998: 434).

Motivational framing is the last of the three core framing tasks which movements go through, and 'provides a "call to arms" or rationale for engaging in ameliorative

collective action' (Benford and Snow 2000: 617). Benford, in his research on nuclear disarmament movements in the US found that the construction of vocabularies, which can then be used to mobilise group members can also be seen as part of the process of motivational framing. This is the agency component where by movement leaders produce a set of vocabularies which provide members with compelling accounts as to why they should engage in any particular way, often drawing upon themes of severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety (Benford 1993; Benford and Snow 2000). In the case of the TJ in London, the question is over the extent the leaders have engaged grassroots members of the movement in counter-framing, and the extent to which they have used language drawing in themes from the *Fazail-E-Amal* to articulate and justify the changes.

The concept of framing has come under attack for its perceived failure to distinguish between ideology and frame – often muddling, confusing or merging the two (Oliver and Johnston 2000b, 2000a; Flood 2009). In a refutation of the this, Snow and Benford argued that frame and ideology are distinct, but at the same time inextricably linked:

> The framing process involves, among other things, the articulation and accenting or amplification of elements of events, experiences, and existing beliefs and, values most of which are associated with existing ideologies...Ideologies constitute cultural resources that can be tapped and exploited for the purpose of constructing collective action frames, and thus function simultaneously to facilitate and constrain framing processes (Snow and Benford 2000, 1988).

Following from this, Snow and Benford comment that:

> Framing provides a conceptual handle for thinking about and analysing the reconstructive work that is required when members of any ideological or thought community encounter glaring distinctions between their beliefs and experiences or events in the world (Snow and Benford 2000).

This is important when examining the actions and behaviour of the TJ in London as it is often the case that the Islamic and traditional ethos of the movement does not resonate

with modern secular living. This sort of 'remedial discourse' is apparently precipitated by a number of occurrences such as,

> when beliefs and events in the world are discordant, when beliefs and behaviour or outcomes contradict each other, and when the existence of competing or conflicting beliefs within a group threatens its coherence and increases the prospect of schism or factionalisation (Snow and Benford 2000).

The remedy for each of the above situations is the re-framing, or re-packaging of ideologies and beliefs – in short it is the method of finding a new way to articulate experiences. This helps to highlight that the packaging of frames for specific mobilisations and actions is 'situationally sensitive, keyed to interactive processes and occurs in a recursive relationship with the dynamics of collective action' (Steinberg 1998: 846; Tarrow 1992: 190-91).

The stages ascribed to framing and scripting above are not clear-cut in reality. This becomes clear when looking at the period of TJ engagement from 2006-2010. As Steinberg comments, in contrast to the sometimes systematic or orderly nature of framing given in the literature, the different categories are 'inherently partly disorganised or fuzzy, since the actual structuring of meaning is done *in use*' (Steinberg 1998: 856). Framing is not simply just the instrumental activity of social movement activists. To use a metaphor that Tilly has employed to describe the repertoire of collective action tactics, framing should be viewed 'less like a completed symphony than like improvisational jazz: composers provide the initial "head for a jamming session, but the improvisations depend on a group of players over whom they have little control' (Tilly 1983: 463). Framing is a constant process of formulating and reformulating ideas depending on a given context and interaction with other actors who have a stake in the situation.

3.7 Frame Resonance

Movement activists are involved in struggles over meaning as they attempt to influence both their surroundings and public policy. An essential task in these struggles is 'to frame social problems and injustices in a way that convinces a wide and diverse audience of the necessity for and utility of collective attempts to redress them' (McCarthy et al. 1996: 291). This need for claims to 'ring-true' is referred to in the literature as 'frame resonance', with movement organisers having to frame their appeals to 'to emphasise ideas or themes that resonate with individuals' observations or experiences' (Walder 2009: 406). Experiences are closely allied to cultural values, beliefs and the social milieu with the success of a movement depending on the extent to which claims being made intersect with these cultural values and practices (Snow and Benford 1992). This is partly why having an understanding of the context in which movements operate in is important. Frames need to resonate with a number of different actors including adherents, constituents and bystanders if movements are to be successful in their goals (Snow and Benford 1992; Mooney and Hunt 1996: 178; Berbrier 1998: 433; Kubal 1998: 542). It is a necessary precondition that frames are both credible and salient if they are not they are likely to fail. This partly explains the change in the London TJ's public rhetoric, ensuring resonance with the wider community.

The credibility of any framing process is a 'function of three factors: frame consistency, empirical credibility, and credibility of the frame articulators or claims makers' (Benford and Snow 2000: 619). Consistency refers to the congruency between a movement's stated "beliefs, claims and actions" and cannot be underestimated in terms of importance (Benford and Snow 2000: 620). So long as there is consistency between what a

movement says it believes in and the way it acts there is credibility even if it is not popular credibility. The greater the contradictions between what a movement says it believes in and what it actually does the less resonant the frame will be, resulting in problems over mobilisation and movement effectiveness. This is a problem TJ leaders in London have found difficult to overcome. The claims that the new mosque will act as bridge to bettering community relations and as an arena for interfaith discussions, does not correlate to the way the movement has behaved in the past. Realising this, at the Public Inquiry TJ representatives stated that TJ should not be judged on past actions, but rather on the desired efforts to change (see chapter 8).

As well as the congruency between what a group says and what they do, one also needs to consider the congruency between the various different messages and statements it puts out into the public arena. For example, a movement may have more than one target audience and the framing needs of each audience may not only be different but also contradictory. Movement activists therefore, have to be careful not to propagate different messages to each of its different target audiences. For Evans:

> This may explain the greatest reason for the failure of a frame to "resonate" with potential participants: it may not have been constructed to maximize this target's participation, but rather with some other target in mind (Evans 1997: 451).

Benford and Snow claim that 'to date, little research has been conducted on this frame resonance factor' highlighting a gap in the literature (Benford and Snow 2000: 620). The case study on the way TJ have utilised their framing and counterframing processes in relation to the construction of the 'mega mosque' will prove a useful addition to this emerging body of literature. Indeed, a claim of the thesis will be that the TJ (from an external perspective) initially failed to garner support over its plans to construct their new mosque because of the perceived lack of congruency between the way the movement

articulated their beliefs in public and the way they were perceived to behave, therefore causing a lack of credibility of the movement.

The second factor that is important in affecting frame resonance is that of the empirical credibility of any given frame. The more evidence there is to support the claims being made in a given frame, then the more credible and appeal that frame is likely to have. It is not 'that the claimed connection has to be generally believable, but that it must be believable to some segment of prospective or actual adherents' (Benford and Snow 2000: 620). This reasoning can be seen with the Heaven's Gate Cult whose leaders were able to convince members to commit suicide in the belief that a spaceship trailing behind a comet would take them up to heaven (Maniscalco 1997). Whilst the Heaven's Gate cult was not credible on a general level, those who had joined the group saw its "empirical" claims as having credibility. As such it may not be that "evidence" backing up a movement's claims has to be true – but it has to be perceived as such by those the movement is targeting. With the TJ, the leaders of the movement in London were not able to initially convince the public or decision makers of their new socially inclusive and multiculturalist stance because the evidence from the mosque in Dewsbury proved the contrary.[18] Having said this, the TJ won their appeal over the enforcement action on their site, as they were able to convince the Planning Inspector that they were in the process of changing their stance.

The third factor influencing frame resonance is that of the credibility of the frame articulators or leaders of the movement. It would seem that the greater the 'status and/or

[18] This is something this researcher is able to identify with after spending some time in Dewsbury in 2007. The TJ mosque there had signs all around warning "un-authorised" people not to enter. Sophie Gilliat-Ray has also experienced problems with access to TJ mosques (Gilliat-Ray 2005)

perceived expertise of the frame articulator and/or the organisation they represent from the vantage point of potential adherents and constituents, the more plausible and resonant the framings or claims' (Benford and Snow 2000: 621). Leaders and spokespersons depending on their qualifications can serve to greatly enhance the credibility of what a movement is trying to articulate. This can be seen in the memoirs of former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who outlined that the best way for the government to quash the 2005 'petrol protestors' was to rally nurses and front line emergency service workers to take the 'moral high ground' away from the protesters, commenting that the protests were endangering the lives of the most vulnerable in society (Blair 2010: 296). The fact that nurses and doctors had made these claims on behalf of the government, Blair's arguments had been strengthened and made credible in the eyes of the public not because they came from the government but from credible front line emergency workers.

Of importance then, will be the extent to which Tablighi leaders in London played a part in reframing the beliefs of the movement in order to further their project, as well as the part played by hiring professional non-Muslim spokesmen to represent the movement. Leaders can be successful if they are able to 'make use of both established and new ideational elements' synthesising the two to blur demarcation between beliefs that are "within the system" and those that are "outside the system" (Tarrow 1992: 190). The result is that opponents will have a more difficult time delegitimating a movement than if, for example it proposed a new framework of interpretation. The implication is that a movement is more likely to 'bridge, extend, or amplify existing frames in the political culture than to create a wholly new one that may have no resonance in the existing culture' (Tarrow 1992: 190). By the same token, movements pay some costs for adapting frames that draw on societal mentalities and consensual political cultures. For

example, ‘the easy relationship between the goals of the Civil Rights movement and traditional American cultural understandings left some Civil Rights leaders open to the challenges of more radical black nationalist groups who rejected the symbolism of white liberalism’ (Tarrow 1992: 190).

As well as being credible, social movement frames must also be salient if they are to achieve the movement’s goals. Part of this salience is remembering that social movements exist in a larger social context and thus must attempt to draw on ‘cultural stock for images of what is an injustice, for what is a violation, of what ought to be’ (Zald 1996: 266; McAdam et al. 1996). The extent to which a movement succeeds in drawing upon these cultural narrations, or what Githens-Mazer has described as ‘myths memories and symbols’ (Githens-Mazer 2007, 2008) will determine the extent to which both current and potential adherents will feel that they are represented by the movement and thus willing to act for the movement. Fisher terms this as ‘narrative fidelity’ arguing that hypothetically, the less abstract and the more culturally embedded a movement’s core frame is, the more salient and thus more credible it will be with the target audience (Fisher 1984). The TJ in London as with other SMOs hence ‘draw upon the larger societal definitions of relationships, of rights and of responsibilities to highlight what is wrong with the current social order, and to suggest directions for change’ (Zald 1996: 267; Babb 1996). Even though social movements may draw on the larger cultural stock it is not to say that all SMOs have equal access to that stock – this is something that has been highlighted throughout this thesis. SMO leaders, organisers and participants are differently situated in the social structure and as a result ‘draw upon the repertoires and frames available to, and compatible with the skills, orientations, and styles of the groups that make them up’ (Zald 1996: 267).

When considering the importance of frame resonance it is also important to recognise the increasing body of literature on strategic framing processes. This refers to framing processes that are 'deliberative, utilitarian and goal directed: Frames are developed and deployed to achieve specific purpose – to recruit new members, to mobilise adherents, to acquire resources and so forth' (Benford and Snow 2000: 624). Strategic framings are the purposeful efforts by SMOs activists to link their interests and interpretive frames with those of prospective constituents and actual or prospective resource providers in what has come to be known as 'frame alignment' (Benford and Snow 2000: 624; Snow et al. 1986; Evans 1997; Jasper and Poulsen 1995). 'Since movements must appeal simultaneously to a general and to an activist audience, strategic framers must be able to accommodate the varying demands of these audiences' (McCarthy et al. 1996: 310). One aspect of this sort of frame alignment has been 'frame amplification' – that is the 'idealisation, embellishment, clarification, or invigorating of existing values or beliefs' (Benford and Snow 2000: 624). Given that cultural resonance, that tapping into the 'myths, memories and symbols' of a target group is so important to the success of a movement it is not surprising to find that most movements seek to amplify or embellish their existing beliefs and values. This sort of frame amplification is especially necessary to movements who rely on the support of those who are different from the usual adherents or beneficiaries of the movement and to movements who have been stigmatised because their ethos does not resonate with the dominant culture's core values (Benford and Snow 2000; Berbrier 1998). The TJ, at least in London, is one of the movements whose leaders adopted strategic framing processes.

This chapter demonstrates the importance of SMT as a theoretical paradigm for understanding the way in which movements manage the process of adapting to shifting contexts. For TJ leaders in London, there was a clear realisation that a failure to adapt to the British context would signal the failure of their objective to construct their new mosque, and hampering the long term development of the movement. The theory highlights that movement leaders are instrumental in negotiating processes of change, reinterpreting traditional doctrines and ideologies in light of new contexts, in order to provide legitimacy for change. Of importance throughout the thesis will be the realisation that movements such as the TJ are framed in certain ways and in turn attempt to frame debates around issues they are involved in. To be successful in their strategies, movements not only have to frame debates and issues in a way that is favourable to themselves, but must also ensure that they resonate with their target audiences, and if possible the wider society. As exemplified by the TJ in London, in order to succeed its leaders have had to rearticulate goals in ways significant to the lives of the wider population, or at least to those selected as a 'target audience'. As will be seen in later chapters, this involved a marked departure from the TJ's traditional message of Islamic piety and reinvigoration of Islam at the grassroots level simply because the British context is one of secular liberalism. SMT will be of further significance when analysing how the TJ leaders in Britain have negotiated contextual shifts from policies of multiculturalism to social cohesion, an increase in securitisation, and ultimately a rise in Islamophobia.

4. Conceiving the Tablighi Jamaat: A Historical Account

4.1 Introduction

Movements are best understood through comprehending both the context from which they emerged as well as the ones in which they are currently found. The socio-political and cultural milieu at the time of formation helps explain the emergence of a movement as well as reasons for why it takes on a certain shape or form. Understanding the context and the ways it changes helps explain why movements adapt over time, as well as how this process is undertaken and managed. TJ as an Islamic revivalist movement was born from effort to increase the number of Muslim subjects in colonial India as part of the effort to increase the share of power for the Muslim community there. It was born from an effort to increase the significance of the role of Islam and it is argued that this is one of the goals of the TJ in Britain today. It is this historical examination of the movement – the factors that led to its inception, the way the early movement was shaped and the way these early influences have characterise TJ's modes of operation today in its transnational contexts that this chapter will examine. Important will be an identification of TJ's core philosophies and objectives as outlined by its founders – what have since become its myths memories and symbols. It is through invoking and embodying these that participants of TJ today feel themselves 'part of a dense network of Muslims, both dead and alive, and cherish a commitment to relive the Prophet's own time when he was part of a faithful few among a population sunken in ignorance' (Metcalf 1982: xv).

4.2 Historical Context

TJ was founded in 1926[19] by Mohammad Ilyas Kandhalawi in the Mewat province of India (south west of Delhi), as a reaction to the supposedly depraved state of Islam in the region. Since then, the movement has grown to be regarded as a transnational organisation with its annual gatherings in both Pakistan and Bangladesh attracting the largest number of Muslims outside of the annual *Hajj* in Mecca (Perlez 2007b; Hicks 2009; Sikand 2010a; Metcalf 2009). In fact, the movement has expanded so much that reports from its 2010 gathering at Tongi in Bangladesh, claim 2 million attendees with up to 5 million for the final day's blessing ceremonies – exceeding even *Hajj* attendees (LapidoMedia 2010). Whilst this thesis is interested in the extent to which the London TJ has transformed its modes of operations as part of a need to demonstrate its suitability as an organisation to construct a large new mosque, it is first important to understand the history of the movement. Tablighis themselves ascribe much importance to their history and to the revivalist strand of Islamic socio-political thought prevalent on the Indian subcontinent at the movement's foundation. To appreciate this context attention must be turned to the demise of the Mughal Empire, the ascendancy of "British India" and to the evolution of Deobandi strand of Islam. [20]

The establishment of the Mughal Empire in the early 1500s which ruled over most of the Indian subcontinent - extending from Bengal in the east to Balochistan in the west, Kashmir in the north to the Kaveri basin in the south – heralded the consolidation of

[19] In actuality, there is no agreement over when the TJ was officially established, Barbara Metcalf places it in the 1920s, Haq in 1927 and Troll in 1925 (Troll 1985). These dates are probably derived from the chronology of events given by Maulana Abdul Hasan Ali Nadwi who claims that Ilyas began making Tablighi rounds after his return from Hajj in 1926.

[20] The term Deobandi Islam is derived from the town of Deoband in India, where the Madrasa Darul Uloom Deoband is situated. Deobandis follow the Hanifa school of Islam – this will be further explored below.

Islam in the region (Richards 1995: 163). The political suzerainty of the Mughals over the region continued to be exercised, at least in theory, until the mid Nineteenth Century. In reality however, the power of the Mughals began to fade with the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, formally coming to an end after the failed Mutiny of 1857, with the deposition of the last reigning emperor by the British (Sikand 2002; Dalrymple 2008). For Muslims in India, the collapse of the Mughal Empire carried with it connotations of the waning of Islam and the ascendancy of Hinduism which had long been present in the region as well as the emerging influences of Christianity and secularism. It was this threat to the Islamic way of life, the shifting of the balance of power in favour of the British and then Hindu majority that inspired the first Islamic reformists in the region and the founding of movements for the reinvigoration of the faith. The establishment of social and religious movements, as outlined in SMT, is a common reaction to a perceived or actual threat to the order of society (Wallace 1956).

Crucial to the intellectual formation of TJ was Shah Waliullah[21] (d.1762). Waliullah who grew-up watching the crumbling of the Mughal system believed that it was the moral collapse of society - a deviation from the path of Islam - that had led to a decaying of the social order which ushered in the decline of the Mughal Empire (Upadhyay 2003; Al-Ghazali 2004). Waliullah had identified a grievance in society and as a means of countering this, purported that there was urgent need for a movement of moral regeneration and a return to the ways of Mohammad and his companions - the *Sahaba* (Haq 1972: 67; Jones 1989: 51).[22] TJ leaders would later view this as essential in their mission to re-orientate Muslims back to the correct practices of Islam. Waliullah was a

[21] For a more in depth analysis of the Waliullah see: (Rizvi 1980; Baljon 1986)

[22] According to Haq, there was also a personal link between Shah Waliullah and Ilyas. Muzaffar Husayn, the maternal grandfather of Ilyas, was a pupil of Shah Muhammad Ishaq who was himself a distinguished student and grandson of Shah Abdul-Aziz, the son of Shah Waliullah. Shah Muhammad Ishaq had been chosen as the successor of Shah Abdul-Aziz since the latter had no sons.

key protagonist in instigating the spiritual revival of Muslims, spreading the message of Islamic spiritualism to the Indian masses and emphasising the propagation of Islam to his students (Mortimer 1988: 67-9). He supported the well-established tradition of *Sufism* in South Asia, promoting a pathway to God through devotion and transformation of the heart. At the same time, however, he condemned what he believed to be external influences and innovations in *Sufi* practices, such a worshiping at graves, advocating the idea of a pure Islam devoid of such influences on the basis that Muslims should assert an independent identity free from the influence of Hindu polytheism (Mortimer 1988: 67-9; Jones 1989: 51).

Just in the same way that Waliullah wanted to revive the temporal and spiritual power of Islam in the wake of the decline of Mughal power, so too did the founders of *Darul Uloom* at Deoband, in the wake of the 1857 Mutiny.[23] The aftermath of the Mutiny was severe: the British evacuated the whole population of Delhi, exiled the Mughal king to Burma and occupied the mosques of the city (Metcalf 1982: 84). The Muslims of Delhi were disproportionately blamed for their part in the Mutiny, 'for the British believed that Muslims had fought from political grievances, Hindus from economic; and the former motive was understood to be more invidious and more dangerous' (Metcalf 1982: 85). It was due to the decline of the predominance of Islam and a breakdown of the social order following the Mutiny that many Muslims turned to their own traditions based on a purer interpretation of Islam for patterns of action in their lives.

The founders of the *madrasa* at Deoband looked towards the creation of a post-Mutiny community of Muslims both observant of detailed religious laws and committed to a

[23] This school would go on to be associated with its own strand of Islam – the Deobandi strand – and it was from this that the TJ would later emerge.

spiritual life of renewal and reinvigoration in the path of Islam (Reetz 2006: 84). The Deobandi emphasis was on the centrality of the *Shari'a* acting as a symbolic marker of identity, uniting Muslims and at the same time clearly distinguishing Muslims from their Hindu neighbours (Sikand 2007: 132). If Muslims applied the *Shari'a* to their lives, dressing as Muslims and abandoning local customary practices, a strong and separate communal identity would emerge. This would ensure Muslims were not swallowed in to the Hindu fold or corrupted by the western influences of British colonialism. This form of mindset has remained strong amongst members of TJ who view the post 9/11 and 7/7 contexts in Britain as similar to those present in the Mutiny's aftermath.

For Metcalf, the Deobandis' uniqueness lay in the extent to which they insisted on a responsible, reformist interpretation of Islam on the part of their followers. It was not enough for a follower of a Deobandi *shaykh* to turn to him, as one might to a Sufi *pir*, for intersession, but was expected to abandon suspect customs, to fulfil religious obligations, and to be responsible for their own actions (Metcalf 1982: 140; Jones 1989: 60). The Deobandi *ulama* were concerned that through their standard of correct belief and practice, they would be defined as a group not only separate from, but also morally superior to the British (Metcalf 1982: 153). It was from this tradition that TJ would later emerge in the 1920s, stressing and intensifying many of the concepts around that individual renewal and moral purity.

TJ has not been alone in emerging from the Deobandi strand of Islam, with both the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam in Pakistan sharing the same ideological origins. Whilst all three may share the same fundamental core: the establishment of communities based on the *Shari'a* and a lifestyle based on the prophetic

model, the different socio-political contexts in which these movements were founded have led to each taking a different approach in the way they operate highlighting the diversity and adaptability of Deobandi movements. Commenting on this adaptability, Metcalf notes that 'none of the Deobandi movements has a theoretical stance in relation to political life'; each adapted its strategy according to local contexts (Metcalf 1982: xxi). This will be important when explaining why the London TJ has been able to pursue a policy of change and adaptation in its modes of operation.

The Barelwis too, were formed as part of the revivalist strand of Islam emerging from the sub-continent at the time, although what made them distinctive was 'that they used their position and their legal scholarship to justify the mediational, custom-laden Islam, closely tied to the intersession of the *pirs* of the shrines, that was characteristic of that area' (Metcalf 1982: 296). The Barelwis guarded traditions such as 'reading the *Fatihah*, observing the Prophet's birthday and calling on saints for help' (Metcalf 1982: 296). As with other *ulama* of the time, they cherished religion as an ever more important part of their identities, but in a period that was seen as threatening that identity, 'they blamed not only the colonial ruler – but perhaps even more – the reformist Muslims' such as the Deobandis and Tablighis (Metcalf 1982: 296). The Barelwis wanted to 'preserve Islam unchanged: not Islam as it was idealised in texts or the historical past, but Islam as it had developed to the present' (Metcalf 1982: 296). The Barelwi and Deobandi movements (including TJ) were aiming to preserve Islam, although their methods were different often condemning each other's methods and interpretations of the faith. The historical differences between the Barelwis and the Deobandis (both originating in close proximity in India) have often been maintained and intensified in the British context. This has had an effect on Muslim community politics in Britain, sometimes serving to split Muslim

communities. This has been seen in Barelwi and Sufi opposition to the TJ's mosque proposals (see chapter 7).

There are a number of specific events which acted as catalysts to the formation of TJ, some of which are distinct from those of other Deobandi groups. As SMT explains, movements are formed through the identification of grievances in a society coupled with the desire to change these. For TJ these factors can be traced to Muslim-Hindu inter-religious tension and strife, climaxing in Hindu conversions of Muslims (Reetz 2006: 85; Hardy 1972). Whilst Islam had not known missionary movements for most of its existence, the need was felt under the impact of missionary activities by Christians and reformist Hindus at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Muslims feared that their numbers could decrease as a result of re-conversion to Hinduism of Muslims who had once been Hindu (Reetz 2006: 75).[24] The *Arya Samaj*[25] and *Shuddhi,*[26] in particular, developed a concept of re-conversion of former Hindus[27], but in practice it was mainly directed at Muslims in general, and could be interpreted as an attempt to discard the influence of non-Hindu civilisation on Indian history (Reetz 2006: 148).[28]

TJ was one of several Islamic movements to have emerged in this context, all focusing on the re-conversion of Muslims swallowed up into the Hindu multitude.[29] That Muslim and Hindu groups were locked in competition with each other shows the extent to which

[24] The heightened religious tensions centred on the battle for the souls of neo-Muslims, or those belonging to late-converted groups who had retained non-Islamic customs in their social etiquette)
[25] Society of Nobles, a Hindu nationalist movement, founded 1875
[26] Hindu 'Purification' Movement
[27] Conversion and re-conversion are alien concepts to traditional Hinduism
[28] For further analysis on Hindu nationalist movements and competition over conversions with Muslims see: (Mayaram 1997), and for a general introduction to relations between Hinduism and Islam in India see: (Char 1997).
[29] These Muslim organisations and movements included the Barelwi *Anjumam Ridai Mustafa* (1923), the *Tablighi-i-Islami* in Ambala, the *All India Anjuman Tablighi Islam*, *Tanzim* in Amristar, *Markazi Jamiat Tabligh Islam* in Poona, and the *Tablighi Mission* (Masud 2000b: lii).

concern over individuals' religious beliefs had come to dominate the scene. This is reflected in Ilyas' words:

> My friends! There is still time to make an effort. Shortly there will be two great forces against Deen [religion]. One is *Shidhi* [a Hindu political movement], which will propagate *kufr* [apostasy] among the ignorant and general masses. The other danger is atheism. This is coming with the rise of western governments and politicians. These two deviants will rise like a wave, whatever you want to do, do it before this happens (Maulana Ilyas as cited in Lambat 1998: 8).

For revivalist movements such as TJ, cleansing popular Islam of Hindu traces and bringing it into greater conformity with scriptural Islam became important. As already argued, the adoption of external markers of identity and community boundaries marking Muslims as distinct was seen as vital, reaffirming them in the faith and making them resistant to conversions.[30] So important was this, that it has remained a key objective for TJ to this day, with the claim being made that outward appearance can often be linked to what is going on in the heart of an individual.[31] Yet, in order to understand the so called race for numbers spurred on by revivalist Hindu and Muslim groups, we must also consider the actions of the third major actor on the Indian scene at the time; the British.

It was a British decree that called for a decennial census (1871), in which communities would be delineated on the basis of religion, with power then being allocated on a proportional basis to each religious community (Hardy 1972; Jones 1989: 184). The granting of separate electorates linked religion, the census reports, political power and political patronage' (Jones 1989: 184; 1981: 78). In effect, colonial policy had the impact of politicising the different religious communities in India. Due to the often fluid boundaries over religious practices amongst certain communities, those communities

[30] This has been a practise, as will emerge later, that the Tablighi Jamaat have continued today in Britain, and to which some commentators claim is a bar to effective community engagement.
[31] See Chapter 6 in this thesis.

who followed a mixture of Hindu and Muslim traditions were, in 1871, forced to identify themselves as either exclusively 'Muslim' or 'Hindu'; these terms themselves defined according to an reified understanding of religion (Oberoi 1994: 17). What really invested these categories with extreme importance for both Muslims and Hindus was that by 1910, British policy had shifted to granting greater participation to Indian elites in government services based on the numerical strength of each community (Sikand 2002: 25). In short the greater the number of a religious community, the greater the share of that community's power in governance. This not only awakened the political appetite for each of the different communities but also led to movements for reinvigoration of faith.

TJ along with other Muslim revivalist groups were born out of an effort to increase the number of Muslim subjects in India, in an effort to increase the share of power for the Muslim community. It is this political importance attached to religion that gave rise to revivalist movements on the sub-continent, and which is now seen as a concern in the context of western societies. For example, in Britain, TJ have faced accusations that the efforts of the movement to increase its members are linked to a political vision, where by the movement would eventually take control of the state (Alexiev 2005; Gaborieau 1999). Proselytising movements, whether Muslim or not, do not however act from a sole desire to increase their adherents for purposes of power, but rather because they are convinced they have the answers to the ills of the world, and in many cases the only key to salvation. Whilst TJ is only one of several movements established in this context it is the only one to have achieved transnational status and mass support throughout the world today.

4.3 Etymology:

This section deals with etymological issues surrounding the name 'Tablighi Jamaat'. Whilst TJ is now known as that, it is not what Ilyas had called the movement at its inception, nor in his view did it adequately represent the movement. For Ilyas there could be no new *jamaat* because for him, Mohammad had established the first and only legitimate *jamaat* – that is the community of Muslims – the *ummah*. Why then has the movement come to be known as such?

The word *tabligh* is derived from the Arabic root *b-l-gh*, meaning 'to reach one's destination, to arrive, to achieve one's objective, to come to hear and to come of age' (Masud 2000b: xx). Further meanings derived from the Arabic root connote the following, 'the transmission, conveyance or delivery of information' (Wehr 1960: 74). *Tabligh* has come to have the stronger meaning of 'propagation' or 'proselytisation' (Nadwi 2002: 43), whilst the word *Jamaat*, simply means 'party' or 'organised collectivity'. The term *Tablighi Jamaat* may be translated as 'propagation party' or 'preaching party' (Sikand 2002: 8). The underlying meaning of *tabligh* in the current context is 'calling others toward one's religion' (Masud 2000b: xxi).[32] This meaning of *tabligh* can be attributed partly to developments in the Twentieth Century spurred on by colonialism, especially within the context of Hindu and Christian missionary activities during this period.

[32] Whilst the Qur'an does not explicitly use the word *tabligh*, words from the *b-l-gh* root are rather frequent (5:67, 33:39, 7:62, 68, 79, 93) all associated with communication or the revelation of a message. The Qur'anic usage according to Masud signifies that 'communication of the message alone is the objective – conversion is not the duty or the mission of a prophet or a preacher; this is left to the free choice of the addressees' (Masud 2000b: xx).

The reason Ilyas did not refer to his movement as 'Tablighi Jamaat' is that his aim was not to proselytise non-Muslims but to work among Muslims, or rather "so-called" Muslims bringing them back into the fold of Islam. It would technically be incorrect to say that one can proselytise fellow Muslims, although it is possible to strive to reinvigorate the faith of Muslims who may have lapsed. This desire to only work amongst Muslims was abandoned by the TJ's second *amir,* who allowed for the propagation of the message to anyone (Gaborieau 2000: 125). TJ has, therefore, had a number of different names, which followers and commentators have referred. At times TJ has been called *Din Da'wat* (call to religious renewal) and Ilyas himself called it *Tahrik-i-Iman* or Faith Movement (Haq 1972), therefore stressing the more complex character of the organisation, which includes more than a crude assertion of proselytisation. The movement in France calls itself 'foi et pratique' again distancing itself from just mere proselytisation and highlighting the importance of the practise of the correct version of the faith (Kepel 2000).

According to Haq, when Ilyas was asked to suggest a name for the movement, he is reported to have said that he was not founding a *Jamaat*; the *Jamaat* of the Muslims had already been formed – 'it has for its constitution the *Qur'an*, the mosque is the place of its activities, its centres are Mecca and Medina and in its programme are Hajj, Ramadan and prayers' (Haq 1972: 45). In this sense Ilyas did not want to be seen as establishing a rival *Jamaat* to the one already established by Mohammad. The name 'Tablighi Jamaat', was perhaps first used by Nadwi - Ilyas' close friend and biographer in the 1940s, and has become the standard name for the group (Nadwi 2002). Most scholars, analysts, and many of the members of TJ interviewed acknowledge the 'label' and, as such, the one that will be used for the purposes of this study.

4.4 Genesis of the Tablighi Jamaat

Many texts examining the genesis of TJ and its founder Mohammad Ilyas, take a hagiographical stance. Haq writes that in April 1926, Ilyas, whilst on *Hajj*, felt that he had been divinely ordered to undertake a lifetime's work of preaching (Haq 1972: 91). Ilyas felt that God had instructed him to found his movement, returning to India with the conviction that the task of preaching should be undertaken among the masses. Tablighi sources state that when at the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, where he spent three days, 'Ilyas saw Mohammad in a dream, who addressed him saying, "Oh Ilyas! Go back to India where God shall take work from you"' (Sikand 2010b). Tablighi narratives focus on divine inspiration - a foundation myth claiming direct instruction from God. This is not unique to TJ but a recurring event in Islam's history. Scholars who came to Mecca from outside Arabia and who for some time lived there, 'often returned home to inaugurate a radical reform movement' (Schimmel 1991: 166). Having experienced a 'pure' Islam unsullied by the influences of western powers or the complexities of heterogeneous societies, inspired scholars felt compelled to share their experiences of 'higher Islam with their coreligionists who, as it seemed, were deeply entangled in sinful syncretistic, nay outright pagan practices and belief' (Schimmel 1991: 167).[33] Ilyas on return from *Hajj* began to see that Muslims in India were devoid of religious fervour, nor were they eager to seek knowledge of the faith.

The early workings of the movement were in the Mewat region of India. Mewat provides a note-worthy example of shifting socio-political contexts in which TJ has been able to

[33] As will be seen in the exploration of SMT – such divine inspiration for the movement is a common feature of many revitilisation movements, with Wallace identifying this as a key factor in all the revitilisation movements he had examined (Wallace 1956).

establish strong roots in a local environment (Sikand 2010a). To some extent, this environment of shifting socio-political contexts has a number of parallels with modern British society, with objectives established in Mewat still resonant for TJ in London. Ilyas regarded Mewat as 'backward' where the inhabitants, although nominally Muslim, had lost touch with what it was to be Muslim – in other words they were in a state of *jahiliyya* – that is the state of ignorance prevalent before the revelation of Islam. Whilst this is commented upon in Nadwi's biography of Ilyas, (Nadwi 2002: 29-59), it is further stressed by other authors. Mayaram comments that the Meos – that is those who live in Mewat - professed a 'happy combination of Hinduism and Islam' (Mayaram 1997: 43), Ibbetson that 'they worship countless gods and symbols', Shams that 'their Islam did not go beyond male circumcision and burial of the dead (Shams 1983: 187), and Singh notes that they lay 'between religions'(Singh 2004). Major Powlett, a member of the British armed forces operating in the area in the early 1900s best represents the situation with this extract, recorded by W. Crooke,

> The Meos are now all Musalmans in name; but their village deities are the same as those of the Hindus, they keep several Hindu festivals…They often keep Brahmin priests to write the note fixing the date of marriage. They call themselves by Hindu names…As regards their own religion the Meos are very ignorant. Few know the *Kalima* and fewer still the regular prayers, the seasons of which they entirely neglect. (Crooke 1906: 489-90)

In this sense, the Meos were the people that revivalist movements targeted. To Hindu's they were legitimate as they followed Hindu customs, as they were to Muslims who wanted to ensure that they would drop remnants of a Hindu culture, and embrace Islam in its totality. The bringing back to Islam of lapsed Muslims is a clear objective of TJ, and one that resonates in modern Britain where in a secular society many Muslims, in the view of TJ, may have deviated from the straight path of Islam, being Muslim in name, but secular in custom. Some Tablighis stress that many Muslims in Britain have deviated so far towards secular society that they have become modern day Meos.

Missionary movements other than TJ had targeted the Meos in the past, with Ilyas drawing his inspiration in developing a comprehensive programme for Mewat from Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi. Thanawi, a theologian and scholar in India at the time, had prepared a programme of *dawah* and *tabligh* focused at instructing the *ulama*. The Tablighi objectives of Ilyas, however, differ in two respects. First, Ilyas dismissed the perception that *tabligh* is solely a function of the *ulama* and educated Muslims, and secondly stressed the importance of the physical movement in small groups – or *jamaats* - to propagate the word of Allah (Masud 2000b: lvi). The literature and work of Thanawi is still recommended as beneficial reading for all Tablighis.[34]

The Meos had worried Ilyas for some time, and he felt that the preliminary *dawah* work he had carried out in the area was not enough as it had left the bulk of the people untouched. The only way to reform the Meos was to spread true religious knowledge among them and to inculcate in them an awareness of *Shari'a* (Haq 1972: 107). This, Ilyas felt, could be achieved through education and the construction of schools and mosques.[35] The construction of places of worship and education as a means of spreading the knowledge of the *Shari'a* emerged as a key Tablighi objective in Mewat, and one that TJ have followed the world over. In this respect, Ilyas in 1934, called a meeting, which brought together notables in the area, including landlords and village elders in order to promote his vision for the region. At this meeting Ilyas presented a programme of objectives and action, which included the following points:

1. Correct memorisation of the formulae of the faith.

[34] Several Tablighis have told me this, and pointed out how well stocked Tablighi bookshops are with Thanawi's tracts and books.
[35] In reality, as Mewat was such a 'backward' area, the majority of children would still be needed by their families to work in the fields, even if education was available.

2. Regularity in the performance of prayers.
3. Education and promotion of knowledge.
4. Formal appearance in accordance with Islam.
5. Adherence to Islamic customs and elimination of idolatrous practices.
6. Purdah (veiling) for women.
7. Abiding by the Islamic faith and rejection of other religions.
8. Necessity of the participation of responsible persons of the community in all meetings.
9. Efforts for the propagation of religion.
10. Protecting each other's honour.

(Masud 2000a: 10-11)

It was from these points that the subsequent Six-Point programme of Tabligh was to emerge. Ilyas demanded of the Meos that:

1. Every week they should preach in their own locality about the basic principles of religion; forming a regular group under a leader and adopting the proper method, they should tour their neighbourhood.
2. For 3 days every month they should go to nearby villages within a distance of a few miles, to preach and hold meetings to persuade the local people to undertake similar tours.
3. For at least four months (3 *chillah*[36]) they should leave their homes and go to centres of learning to study about religion.[37]

(Haq 1972: 116)

Because of the work in Mewat, and a growing belief in that region that Ilyas was a holy man, the movement expanded rapidly, with many people starting to give up their time for *jamaat*. By the time of Ilyas' death in 1944, his movement had expanded and gained publicity across the subcontinent. The importance of this section of Tablighi history is in the fact that Tablighis today stress the movement remains true to the teachings and methods established by Ilyas for the Mewat region – that it is this same model that Tablighi groups follow whether they are in Lahore or London, Calcutta or Cape Town.

4.5 Ideology and objectives

[36] One *Chillah* lasts for 40 days

[37] In the beginning the demand was only for one *chillah*. It is not clear whether this service for a period of 4 months was expected once in a life time or once a year – although the recent thought is that it is a one off event. Indeed, whist at the *Masjid Ilyas,* in London as part of my field work – I was informed by a Tablighi that the 40 day endeavour was expected from each Tablighi man only once in their life time, and preferably towards the start of his commitment. He went further to say that one should think of the 40 day endeavour like the 'old rechargeable batteries' whereby the first time they are charged they need a long period of time, followed by shorter bursts thereafter. (Author Interview, Thursday 22 October, 2009, Masjid Ilyas, west Ham, London).

Growing out of the Deobandi strand of Islam, TJ activists stressed then as they do now, traditional Islamic practices linked to worship, dress and behaviour as a path to personal improvement, regeneration and as distinguishing from non-Muslims (Friedman 2005: 3). The central ideologies and *raison d'être* for the movement may be found within the *Fazail-E-Amal*[38] which every member of the group is required to consult and study on a frequent (some say daily) basis. The *Fazail-E-Amal* is a compilation of texts mainly written or gathered by TJ's most eminent ideologue Mohammad Zakariyya, with chapters focusing on stories of the *Sahaba*, commentaries on the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as well as advice on moral regeneration.[39] The manual contains a chapter by Ihtishamul Kandhalawi (Muslim degeneration and its only remedy) and Maulana Ishaq Elahi ("Six Fundamentals" – essentially a commentary upon Ilyas' six-points). In his introduction to the volume, Zakariyya explains that the book serves a number of purposes, including to inspire the spirit of Islam in children who listen to the stories, to help remedy the bad practices of millions of Muslims who have 'indulged in manifest false worship' and who live in an 'ignorance of Islam', and to provide concrete examples of legitimate Islamic lifestyles upon which readers may base their own life (Kandhlawi 1997a: 12; 1997b: 5-6).

[38] The main anthology of texts used by the TJ, translated as "The Virtues of Good Deeds".

[39] The TJ are so focused on this text as the guide to their everyday actions, that its critics have accused the movement of raising it above the *Qur'an*. The TJ's critics have also accused the *Fazail-E-Amal* as containing mainly weak or fabricated *Hadith* that serve to further the purposes of the movement as opposed to the strict message of Islam. In refutation of this, a senior scholar at Deoband stated: 'It is a total misconception that Fazail-E-Amal is the guide book of TJ. This book only consists of the virtues of good deeds. The concept of TJ was not derived from this book, nor is the jamaat dependent on this book to do the work of *tabligh*. They thought it necessary to stipulate such a book that would encourage people towards good deeds, and this book served the purpose; therefore, the people who join this work are advised to stipulate a specific time for the reading of this book. However, it is not compulsory upon each an every person who joins this effort to read this book. See: http://www.sunniforum.com/forum/showthread.php?29176-Objections-on-Fazail-e-Aamal-Answered-by-Darul-uloom-Deoband (accessed: 15/01/2012)

The *Fazail-E-Amal*, not to mention the majority of TJ's literature is meant to be used as a stimulus to everyday behaviour providing the pattern to which one ought to orientate one's own life. The significance of using such literature to help re-orientate lifestyle patterns is that it enables followers to feel 'part of a dense network of Muslims, both dead and alive, and cherish a commitment to relive the Prophet's own time when he too was part of a faithful few among a population sunk in ignorance' (Metcalf 1982: xv). This serves to strengthen the imagined community of Tablighis across the world as they all share in the simultaneous striving for the reformation and reorientation of their lives to the very model of that lived by Mohammad.

TJ is based on a six point programme devised by Ilays and for him were the best way in achieving a true Islamic existence thus a guarantor of salvation. The six-points obligatory of Muslims are:

1. Recitation of the *Kalimah* (Article of Faith)
2. *Salat* (ordained prayers)
3. Knowledge (of the principles of Islam) and remembrance (of God)
4. Respect for Muslims
5. Sincerity of intention
6. Donation of, and good use of spare time in the path of God

(Ilyas 1967; Elahi 1992, 2007)

These points, with the exception of the donation of time are *Sufi* principles, reflecting the background from which TJ stems. According to the *Sufi* tradition, the heart is the centre of human and spiritual activity, and, therefore, the affairs of the heart have precedence over everything else. Ilyas likewise believed that the proper technique for his movement was for the heart to do most of the work. Elahi, a Tablighi ideologue, has argued that the significance of the six point programme is that it aims in particular at the revitilisation of faith, as well as reforming the whole character of the individual (Elahi 1992: 11-12). The six-points for TJ members reflect the entirety of Islam providing a complete system and

structure for living in the world. TJ members believe, and have made it their objective to ensure, that every Muslim is able to make a correct declaration of the faith, know how to perform ritual prayers correctly and with regularity, inculcate a habit of remembering God – repeating his name until it has become internalised, respect other Muslims for all Muslims are united as Allah's illuminated community in the form of an indivisible *ummah*, behave honestly and with integrity in all actions and importantly to spend time in passing on this message to other people (Sardar 2006). The primary objective is that by taking a grassroots approach, where every Tablighi has a responsibility to spend time in disseminating the message, eventually every Muslim will be brought back to Islam (as seen by TJ).

TJ adherents subscribe to a dichotomous view of the world, whereby our time here (on earth) is just a fleeting moment with all efforts having to be directed at attaining entry to the hereafter:

> The real life is the life hereafter. The time in this world is just like a needle dipped into the sea, just a small drop on the tip of the needle. The whole ocean is like the hereafter. Very temporary, very temporary this life. Allah wants to bestow on us the success and favour of never ending life after death. This is why Allah has made this world. The time will be when we cultivate our deeds for the hereafter. And everything is being made for *insan* [mankinind] and *insan* [mankind] has been made to prepare for the life after death.[40]

It is not the here and now that counts but rather the eternal, the place where one is to reside forevermore after the earthly life has passed. Tablighis are encouraged to shun the bright lights of this world and retreat to a rhythm of working on the path of Allah, ensuring their entry into the hereafter and avoidance of the fires of hell. A popular saying amongst TJ members, and one which Elahi highlights says, 'this world and whatever is in it is cursed by Allah, with the exception of prayers, knowledge of Allah, the religious

[40] Extract from Thursday 18 August 2010, Gathering and Talk, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

scholar and the religious student' (Elahi 1992: 13). All efforts have to be directed at religious obligation with other matters being anathema. It is here more than anywhere else that TJ is clearly an NRM. In a section on his commentary of the six points of Tabligh, Elahi builds on the theme of shunning the affairs of the world and building up faith:

> 'Though there may not be sin in many activities and hobbies, yet they are a sheer waste of time. This is the characteristic of a true believer, that he spends his time only on virtuous deeds, remembers Allah as much as possible and avoids all forbidden things.' (Elahi 1992: 37-38).

The clearest written indication of this ideology in the literature of the TJ comes in the introduction of Ilyas' 'Six-Points of Tabligh' by Sadruddin Ansari:

> We all know that this world is mortal. Everyone who is born here is destined to die one day, and everything that flourishes here is to meet its decay sooner or later. We are therefore bound to believe that this is not our permanent and perpetual abode; we can never succeed in living here forever. No one so far could do so and no one shall ever do so. Should we take this world as an external and everlasting home we should not be more than a fool…We are here on a journey and our original and real destination is yet to come. We are born here only to decorate our eternal home. We cannot be called wise if we prefer this mortal existence to the eternal one. It is a fact and we must bear it in mind permanently that our sole duty is to strive for the betterment of our real home. (Ilyas 1967: 9)

A key objective of the movement is to encourage its followers to abstain from the trials and tribulations of this earthly world, instead focusing their attention at the 'betterment of their real home' - their heavenly abode. This has led to a split in opinion over the implications of this on the Tablighis' relations with the wider society. For Metcalf, participants in TJ have made a 'lifestyle choice; they have found a stance of cultural identity; they have opted for a highly disciplined life of sacrifice; they have found a moral community of mutual acceptance and purpose' and as such must be viewed as positive (Metcalf 1982: xv). An alternative view, however, is that this encourages a disengagement from the wider society leading to a distinct separation of the Tablighi community from other communities. The emphasis on the heavenly at the expense of the everyday has allowed TJ followers to retreat from an increasingly fast paced world,

which they view as immoral and damned. This refuge-like role of the movement partly explains its success, but at the same time come to be the image the movement in London is battling. Instead TJ leaders in London claim that the movement is open, tolerant and in favour of community partnerships (Mohammed: 2011).

TJ has at times been characterised as a movement that follows a 'salafist' ideology, bracketed into the same category with movements such as Al Qaeda, Wahhabis or the Muslim Brotherhood. *Salafis* according to Meijer strive to emulate the lives and actions of Mohammad and 'the first three generations of Islam referred to as the pious forefathers as much as possible in all areas of life' (Meijer 2009b: xiv). For Reetz, the entire way of life which the Tablighis follow is 'structured by their desire to relive the early Islamic community' and in this sense TJ are 'salafi' (Reetz 2003). Despite this similarity of wishing to emulate the first generations of Muslims, something that most Islamist groups follow, one should be careful of drawing too strong a parallel between *Salafis* proper and TJ who stem from the Deobandi strand of Islam. As Reetz notes, the main difference between the two is that the *Salafis* have outright rejected *Sufism* whilst TJ emanating from the Deobandi school, remain firmly within the tradition of Waliullah, and for the most part retain significant elements of *Sufi* practices (Reetz 1999). *Salafis* usually reject the "blind following" of the four canonical law schools supporting individual interpretation of the *Qur'an* and *hadith*, albeit along strict lines (Meijer 2009a: 4). Alternatively, TJ and the Deobandis are very much grounded in the canonical law schools, especially the *Hanafi*.

Whether on a proeslytisng tour or just in the process of every day life, Tablighis are encouraged to follow a rigid set of regulations that moderate their behaviour ensuring

correct emulation of the pious ancestors. These rules include the following, and can be found in much of TJ's literature (Miah 2001: 69-74; Ilyas 1967: 47-50; Kandhlawi 2007b):

- Dust your bed three times before you go to sleep
- For sleeping lie down on your right side, put your right hand under your right cheek and recite: Oh Allah in your name I live and die
- Eat always with your right hand
- Always eat from the corner of the dish
- Always use a tablecloth
- Do not put you hands in the middle of the dish for, it is in the middle where the divine blessing descends
- Lick up the fingers if they bear some of the food
- Always drink water while sitting with the right hand and in three pauses

Committed Tablighis not only try to emulate the ideals or spirit of what Mohammad and his companions said and did, but to the very letter. This system of behaviour is tied up with a system of points and rewards. One participant told me that depending on which action one follows, one is rewarded a certain amount of points. If one cleans their plate and licks their fingers they are awarded "x" amount of points. If they sleep on their rights side and dust their bed they are awarded a different amount of points. At the end of a Muslim's life, "Allah will tally up the points and decide on who can enter the hereafter."[41] In this way emulating the pious ancestors is not just a way of life whilst on earth, but also a way of ensuring entry into heaven.

The ultimate objective of TJ according to a number of scholars, is similar to that of Maududi's Jamaat-i-Islami. That is to establish an Islamic world order focusing on the centrality of the *Shari'a* (Reetz 2003; Gaborieau 1999; Alexiev 2005; Sikand 2006; Horstmann 2007). Indeed, during 1939 Maududi visited Ilyas in Mewat to observe TJ's work for himself, later writing of the TJ as a 'major milestone in the onward march of Islamic revival' (Sikand 2002: 96). Ilyas reciprocated by declaring that Maududi was

[41] Conversation over dinner with two committed Tablighi members, 22.10.2009, London

involved in the 'real work of Islam' adding that his own endeavours were merely laying the foundations (Nadwi 2002). Although TJ might have ambitions of seeing the establishment of *Shari'a* based governance, the claim is different to that made by TJ leaders in London, instead declaring that its objectives are completely apolitical (Mohammed 2011). One of the first statements regarding the apolitical nature of the was made by Ilyas:

> When were are unable to fulfill the commandments of Allah in our personal life for which we have full authority and control, then how can the administration of the world be handed to us? The reason for the caliphate and leadership of Muslims in the world is so that it establishes the will and commandment of Allah on earth. However, if we are not capable of fulfilling the commands of Allah in our limited self how can we hope for an Islamic state and the leadership? (No'mani 1991: 20)

It is difficult to ignore the political context from which TJ emerged - there were the demands of the Muslim League calling for a separate Muslim state in Pakistan, while many of the *ulama*, especially those from a Deobandi tradition were arguing in favour of a united India, which in due course could be Islamised (Ahmed 1991: 168; Pearson 2008). The above, however, indicates that whilst the establishment of an Islamic world order was indeed a (long term) objective, as it is for most Islamist movements, one cannot achieve that goal through political means. For Ilyas, Muslims must first re-orientate their lives towards Allah proving to him that they are capable of the task to be bestowed upon them, allowing Allah to decide when that time should be. In this sense then, it is acceptable to postulate that at least in theory TJ have followed a quietist version of political Islam leaving the hard politics to God, and instead focus on Islamising society at the grass-roots level.

4.6 Organisation and Structure of Tablighi Jamaat

The organisation and structure of TJ may be analysed at both permanent and temporary levels. The permanent include the official leadership structures and hierarchy of Tablighi mosques and centres. The temporary include the composition of individual *jamaats* that are sent out on missionary tours. The two are closely related, with the way in which the permanent structures are organised directly influencing the structure of the individual *jammats*, even if that structure only lasts for as long as each *jamaat* is out in the field. As Masud notes, each individual *jammat* is named as such, so as to 'signify that it is a micro-representation of the movement as a whole (Masud 2000a: 29).

Despite attempts to understand the hierarchy of TJ there is still considerable confusion surrounding the leadership, power dynamics and structure of the movement. This is further complicated by the international nature of the movement leading to complex systems of communication between the international headquarters, regional headquarters and local mosques. Gaborieau has commented that TJ has from the very beginning remained 'centralised and the leadership jealously kept by the lineage of the founder' (Gaborieau 1999: 21). Gaborieau quotes the sociologist Felice Dasetto, who has described the movement as 'a total institution' comparing it to a sect, citing evidence that 'none of those having reached the inner core have ever spoken' of the workings of the movement (Gaborieau 1999: 21). Whilst little is known about the middle echelons of the movement, a better picture of the top and bottom tiers of the organisation have started to emerge. The importance of this is that knowing about the leadership and membership of an organisation often helps in analysing the process of who forms the group's objectives, how they are formed, why they are formed and how processes of change may be enacted.

The leadership of the movement started with Mohammad Ilyas. After this, the process of succession becomes ever more complicated with fewer sources shedding light on the internal process of progression through the hierarchy. On his deathbed Ilyas called upon three of his most trusted colleagues asking them to consider his successor from a list of six people[42] (Masud 2000a: 12-13). After some discussion amongst senior members, two names were returned to Ilyas – these being Mohammad Yusuf (his son) and Hafiz Muqbal Hasan (a close relative). After some consideration, Ilyas decided on Mohammad Yusuf as he thought the wider population would favour him more (Masud 2000a: 13)[43]. After Mohammad Yusuf (d. 1965), the leadership passed to Inaam ul-Hasan (d. 1995), a nephew of Ilyas and one of the original candidates proposed for the position by Ilyas (Gaborieau 2006: 57).

Mohammad Yusuf's death was sudden, and not an event anticipated by TJ leadership or discussed in terms of succession. According to Masud's analysis of the primary documents concerning the event, Maulana Zakariyya (the paternal first cousin of Ilyas, who married Ilyas' daughter, and whose daughters married Yusuf and Inaam ul-Hassan respectively (Gaborieau 2006: 57)) took the initiative in proposing Inaam ul-Hasan as he had been the closest companion of Yusuf and the architect behind the internationalisation of the movement (Masud 2000a: 18). Following the death of Inaam ul-Hasan in 1995, TJ leaders decided that due to the movement's mass expansion a different leadership structure would be needed. TJ concluded that a council should be elected in order to oversee the movement.

[42] These were Hafiz Muqbal Hasan, Qari Daud, Mawlawi Ihtishamul Hasan Kandhalawi, Mohammad Yusuf Kandhalawi, Mohammad Inaam ul-Hasan Kandhalwai and Sayid Rada Hasan Bhopali

[43] The three senior colleagues were Maulana Zakariya, Maulana Abdul Qadir Raipuri and Maulana Zafar Ahmad. This process of appointing the amir was supposed to reflect the process used for the appointment of the successor of the second Caliph of Islam Omar bin al-Khattab. Omar however asked his six companions to chose from amongst themselves rather than from another group who had no say in the matter.

The initial members of this council compromised of Izhar ul-Hasan (a close blood relative of Ilyas), Zubayr ul-Hasan (son of Inaam ul-Hasan) and Saad ul-Hasan (son of Mohammad Yusuf) (Masud 2000a: 19). Since the death of Izhar ul-Hasan in 1996 the governing executive council is now made up of the two remaining relatives of Ilyas performing as *amir* (Arshad 2007).[44] In the strictest sense the absolute final decision making powers in the movement fall to these two men, although in reality a much wider consultative process is in place, where senior members of the movement from across the globe can add their input to the process.

Mayaram argues that the process of succession has not been as fluid as some in the TJ would describe, noting that after Yusuf's death, his brother, Hazrat Kandhalawi started to 'dominate the decision making structure at Nizamuddin' with even the official *amir* having to consult him before decisions were made (Mayaram 1997: 224). It was from this split that the trend towards a dual hereditary leadership emerged (Mayaram 1997: 224). Further to this, Reetz has commented that Maulana Saad has moved to the centre of the movement and is now seen as the 'spiritual and symbolic head' attracting immense popularity on an international level (Reetz 2004: 302; 2008: 109). Maulana Zubayr apparently concentrates on the structure and organisation of the movement, working behind the scenes.

Besides the dual leadership, it is acknowledged that the movement has a larger consultative (*shura*) council operating out of the *Markaz* at Nizamuddin. According to Reetz and others who have spent time at Nizamuddin, the council, which in total amounts

[44] As Gaborieau notes, the movement is centred around an exceptionally tight endogamous patri-lineage (Gaborieau 2006: 57)

to 15 members, consists of elders coming from all over India and meets daily in private, whilst also holding an open meeting on Thursday, the day of their local *ijtima* (Reetz 2004: 302). Anecdotal evidence suggests that not all members of the council have to attend every meeting, with a rotational system in place of sharing of responsibilities, whilst at the same time guaranteeing that any decisions pertaining to incoming or outgoing preaching groups 'are not left undecided' (Reetz 2004: 302).

At the bottom of the movement's power structure come the Tablighi preaching groups – the *jamaats*. These are temporary structures with an elected *amir* operating only for the period of each individual tour. The next level up is found at the level of the local mosque where each has its consultative council that meets on a regular basis to discuss Tablighi work and goals in the locality. The next level is at the *markazi* level. This is where certain central mosques have responsibility of oversight for other smaller mosques in the wider region. A council of elders from the *markaz* meet on a daily basis to discuss goals for each of the mosques they are responsible for and to ensure that the communication process and work of Tabligh is going according to plan. As one participant told me, coordination across all the different levels is particularly important because the movement does not wish to send out multiple *jamaats* to the same area:

> that would be a bit like the Jehovah's Witnesses knocking on your door one morning, and then half an hour later a different group of Jehovahs knocks at your door, and then an hour later yet another, and you just get really angry and tell them never to come again. Its like with our work, we don't want to pester people and anger them – its important to be organised and professional and that is why information about *jamaats* is shared across the different levels[45]

There are then councils of elders at the national level and then at the international level, with the highest authority being based at Nizamuddin. Penderson adds that every three

[45] Interview with TJ adherent, Thursday 19 August, Green Street Newham

moths councils are held in different countries where at least one leading member from each country should try and attend, and every five years a grand council is held in India where representatives from around the world are present and instructed in cases of best practice (Penderson 1999: 140). International objectives of the movement are set at these 'grand council' events. Of interest in the following chapters will be the extent to which, with the rapid expansion of the movement, regional councils have managed to assert some autonomy in their decision making process at the expense of the international leadership. For example, the claim that TJ in London have acted outside of the authority of the Nizamuddin in attempts to gain planning permission for the Markaz Ilyas project will be examined (Taylor 2009).

Even though Yusuf claimed that TJ is not a traditional organisation in the sense that they do not have offices, registers or funds (Yusuf as cited in Masud 2000a: 28), TJ's activities are coordinated through specific headquarter centres called 'Markaz'.[46] Since its inception, TJ has maintained its international headquarters at the *Markaz* of Nizamuddin in the Western Nizamuddin district of Delhi (Mayaram 1997: 228). TJ also has headquarters in many countries they operate in. These headquarters oversee Tablighi activities within each individual country, with each local mosque reporting its activities back to the *markaz*. The regional *markaz* in communication with the central *markaz* at Nizamuddin, often receives centralised instructions, as well as a frequent exchange of leaders and *jamaats* – much like a franchise.[47] A hierarchy of regional centres also exists

[46] In the Tablighi system of mosque organisation there exist two types – the Markaz and the Masjid. The Markaz is a centre which has oversight over other mosques which are known as masjid. Each masjid must coordinate with its markaz, and each markaz must coordinate with the international headquarter markaz based in Nizimoudin in India.

[47] At the gathering on 2 September 2010, at Markaz Ilyas, it was announced that a jammat would be organised to go Nizamuddin

with each *markaz* having a different position of prominence in the international movement.

So important is the *Markaz* at Nizamuddin to the movement that it has been metaphorically described as 'the heart circulating blood through the body' of TJ (Mayaram 1997: 228). It is the centre of the Tablighi universe, a place where people are trained to go out to do missionary work, where tours to all over the world are organised from, and a hub of communication and dissemination of information for Tablighis all over the world (Khan 1986: 34). It is also the place where the *amirs* and councils of the movement reside. Apart from the *Markaz* at Nizamuddin there are two other geographical areas of importance – Mecca and London. According to Gaborieau, the first priority after India was to have a centre in the Holy places of Islam in order to promote the movement throughout the Muslim world by targeting those on the annual Hajj pilgrimage; the second priority was to establish a centre in London that could be used as a bridgehead to promoting the movement throughout Europe and the West (Gaborieau 2000: 131). This is why the objective of building of the 'Markaz Ilyas' in West Ham has been important to TJ.

Further to these three geographic areas there have been suggestions that the real power of the movement has shifted from the *Markaz* at Nizammudin to the *Markaz* at Raiwind in Pakistan, where the elderly Mohammad Abdulwahhab, one of the few remaining people who personally knew Ilyas, is *amir* of the regional *Markaz* (Khattak 2009; Gaborieau 2000: 130). The *Markaz* at Raiwind is also said to be more politically oriented than Nizamuddin often attracting senior politicians and dignitaries to its gatherings. The *Markaz* near Dhaka in Bangladesh has also been noted as a centre whose progress should

be watched, with the annual gatherings there attracting vast amounts of pilgrims (Gaborieau 2000: 130; LapidoMedia 2010). Tablighi interviewees denied Raiwind's elevation over Nizamuddin, commenting that Nizamuddin always has been and will be the most important Tablighi centre.

One of the specific reasons for the lack of information over the hierarchical structure of TJ is that unlike other organisations or movements, TJ has very few official sources of information. Even though there are some publications specific to TJ, such as those of Zakariyya, the stress of the movement was not on book learning, but on face-to-face, or heart-to-heart communication (Metcalf 2004: 273). Whilst there is the temptation in our information-driven society to see this lack of written information as secretive, it chimes with traditional Islamic practice of preferring the oral over the written, or at least the written serving only as an aid to what was spoken (Robinson 2009: 342-3). Whilst the available published material does not discuss the leadership structure of the movement on the macro level, it does so on the micro level, on the level of the individual *jamaats* that are sent out from each mosque to spread *dawah*.

Whilst information regarding the structure of the movement may be difficult to come by in the literature, it is a question that one can attempt to explore through the interview and conversational aspect of fieldwork. One adherent in a conversation explained that the system for appointing leaders "basically works like this. The international council based in Nizamuddin selects the leaders of the different countries, the country leaders then pick the local leaders and each preaching *jamaat* is free to choose its own leader".[48] When asked if there was consultation between the international and national branches before

[48] Interview conducted Thursday 29 October 2010, Green Street, London

selecting the leaders the respondent was not too sure, although did mention that TJ usually employed a method of consultation before major decisions were taken.

Each individual *jammat* reflects and mirrors the structure of the main TJ organisation. Ilyas made it clear in his six points that each individual *jamaat* is to work under the instruction of an *amir* selected by the group for the duration of the tour (Ilyas 1967: 51). Ilyas stipulated that each *jamaat* through selecting an *amir* are therefore entrusting him with the overall responsibility and oversight of the mission – this 'helps maintain the discipline and smooth running of the system (Ilyas 1967: 51). It is expected that whilst on tour all the members of a *jamaat* will obey the *amir* and carry out his instructions willingly. The *amir* on his part is to consult with his colleagues on all matters before making the final decision, and further, it is his responsibility to ensure the cohesion and success of the mission (Miah 2001: 66; Ilyas 1967: 51). The *jammats* are also requested to choose from among themselves a speaker and a guide, with the latter having to know the area being targeted well.

Whilst the structures of *jammats* reflect the structure of the organisation as a whole, they also differ. The orgainisational structure of the individual *jammats* is more egalitarian that the movement as a whole. Theoretically any Muslim can take part in a preaching tour, and anyone form among the group has the chance of being elected as *amir* by his peers for the duration of the tour. In theory whilst on tour the *amir* must consult with every member in the group before making a decision. This is not the case with the over all leadership of TJ which has remained in the hands of the Kandhalawi family and which sometimes follows a closed or secret agenda 'which is deliberately kept away from the public eye' (Reetz 2004: 301). This is further expressed in the sentiments of Yusuf who

claimed that at the higher echelons of the organisation 'majority opinion is not our basis of decision, and it is not necessary to ask everyone's opinion on every issue' (Hasani 1982: 777).

4.7 Methods of the Tablighi Jamaat

TJ leaders, since the inception of the movement have claimed that they are not introducing new or innovative methods in order to achieve objectives, but rather reviving the methods of *tabligh* as practiced by the *sahaba* in the early days of the Islamic period.[49] Each Tablighi mosque or centre sends out individual *jamaats* of several men each week on *dawah* missions - these form the nucleus of Tablighi activity at the base level.[50] Going out on *jamaat* is the process whereby individuals as part of the sixth point of Ilyas' six points voluntarily donate their time in order to travel and "proselytise" other Muslims[51]. This 'effort' according to Tablighi literature is the same work that Mohammad himself was engaging in. For example, Elias comments that the Prophet and one of his companions left Mecca and traveled for '60 kilometers…on foot to invite the people to Islam' (Elias 2004: 7). Mohammad met the chiefs of the people presenting to them his case, staying among them for 10 days. (Elias 2004: 7). From this, Elias extrapolates that it was prophetic method for groups to go out on foot, meet with leaders, put their case for Islam to them and then spend a set number of days amongst the population preaching Islam.

[49] This notion, however, has been hotly contested by other Islamic scholars who claim that there is no mention in either the Quran or the hadith relating to the Prophet sending out individual groups for 3 or 40 days to towns in order to proselytise others.
[50] A description of a typical Tablighi tour may be found in the appendices to this thesis.
[51] This voluntary donation of time is also known as *chilla*

For Elias the structure of TJ is derived from this method, as Mohammad himself had been *amir* and spokesperson, consulting with his companions. (Elias 2004: 8-12). For Ilyas:

> The main object of our *jamaat* is to teach the Muslims the original and genuine religion taught by the Holy Prophet. This is our real object; as far as our Tabligh and tours, this is a preliminary means to carry out our mission; the instruction of *kalimah Tayyibah* and *Namaz* is the alphabet of our course (Ilyas 1967: 62).

In fact the objective of the preaching tours is twofold – the participants should reform themselves as well as propagating the faith to those Muslims who had remained disinterested or ignorant in the ways and practices of Islam. These preaching tours have become the hallmark of the movement and today traverse the globe putting into practice the Tablighi programme, which they must all be familiar with (Reetz 2008: 101).

TJ's methods of *dawah* differ from the Islamic norms of concentrating on preaching in mosques. The major departure point has been the emphasis on spending time to travel in order to spread the message of Islam as opposed to propagation through fixed centres of Islamic education. In this sense, according to Mayaram, TJ built upon and furthered the work of the 'nineteenth century Muslim reformers such as Sayyid Ahmad, who had been stimulated to travel by the example of Christian missionaries' (Mayaram 1997: 228). TJ, rather than waiting for individuals to come to the mosque to be instructed in the faith, go out in to the world and stress participation, group work and a focus on renewing and revitilising the faith of current Muslims at the grassroots level (Sardar 2006). This can be seen as an attempt by TJ to engage local communities in the message and work they have to spread, although in the west it is not always viewed in this way.

TJ encourages its male members to go out on missionary tours away from their local area.[52] This change of environment and travel out of one's place of work and residence allows the mind of each individual Tablighi to be focused on the work of *dawah* as well as enabling them to meet other Muslims, reminding them of their duties as prescribed by the *Shari'a*. For Tablighi leaders, this process of traveling away from the familiar to the unknown is absolutely essential for the development of the individual as it is only through leaving familiar surroundings that one is able to discriminate between the 'vital and trivial in one's life' (Masud 2000b: xvi) and thus be able to make a conscious step towards hearing the call of Allah. As Ilyas commented:

> So long as we are surrounded by our domestic affairs and occupational environment we can hardly make our mind realize due importance of the hereafter…our minds remain occupied with whatever we do or come across in our daily life and seldom make time to study the life of our beloved Prophet (Ilyas 1967: 37).

Masud describes this physical movement from one's current surroundings to others less familiar as comparable with the concept of '*Hijra'* both in the sense of migration and withdrawal (Masud 2000b: xvi). The process can be regarded as not only physical travel, but also a spiritual journey – a journey of traveling within oneself. The Tablighi travels from worldly pursuits to working in the path of Allah.

Travelling away from one's locale to spread the word of God and to develop one's own sense of spirituality is also seen as important in other proselytising movements such as the Mormons. For the Mormons, the period spent on mission is an important rite of passage, a time when young Mormons can dedicate themselves to a total commitment to preaching the gospel, and can often 'gain a degree of status within the Mormon world that may last a life time' (Davies 2000: 175). The word 'mantle' is often used to refer to a

[52] The movement is also increasingly organising *jamaats* for women, in which they are led by a husband of a woman in the group, and to which their message is directly aimed at other Muslim women.

'special religious state' that missionaries are in – a sense of being 'spiritually guided or empowered by God, or able to provide words of encouragement that seem to possess a depth over and above that which a nineteen year old might expect to command' (Davies 2000: 175). This is remarkably similar to Tablighi experience of mission – a process from which Tablighi men often claim to have returned changed.

This notion of working in the path of Allah is best summed up by Siddiqur Miah who comments:

> When we are on Tablighi tour our main objective is to purify our heart and to prepare ourselves for the life after death, we should therefore be more particular about our time; and by avoiding all sorts of futile affairs we should utilize every moment of this limited time to gain something good. (Miah 2001: 59).

The traveling groups usually first arrive at the mosque of the area they want to target. They bring sleeping bags and cooking utensils, sleeping and eating in the mosque for the duration of their stay.[53] After prayers the *jamaat* divide themselves into smaller teams – a number go into the community knocking doors inviting people to the mosque, telling them about the work of *tabligh* and *dawah*, whilst others remain in the mosque ready to receive any people going there. Hasani has quoted Maulana Yusuf, as having set as a target of one person from each household approached going out for three *chillas* with TJ (Hasani 1982: 772). According to Reetz the success rate of these missions, and this is only in the case for convincing people to attend prayer, vary from 2-10 % out of which some may have already been regulars at the mosque (Reetz 2004: 297; 2008: 101). Once a sufficient number have gathered at the mosque, prayers are said followed by an inspirational talk based around the principles of the six-points, this is followed by further readings from the writings of Zakariyya, and finally people are asked to volunteer for

[53] The author witnessed this on several occasions during fieldwork and was invited to join in with one of the evening meals in the mosque.

tours themselves.[54] At the Markaz Ilyas, on an average Thursday evening between 5-15% of those gathered volunteer.[55]

These travels, in order to ensure best outcome, are organised according to strict discipline and programme, which include learning sessions and the practice of the six basic tenants of *Tabligh* (Masud 2000a: 24-25). There is a set pattern for Tablighi tours that every Tablighi male is expected to abide by during his lifetime. Hasani summarises this commenting that (Muslim) men should donate:

> - three days per month on a preaching tour to an area outside of their locality;
> - Forty days per year (also known by the Sufi phrase *chilla*) which involves a longer period of withdrawal from one's own way of life in order to focus on the work of *Allah*. This could involve travel to a distant location from one's own area, and possibly even to another country;
> - A once in a lifetime 'grand *chilla*' which consists of three consecutive *chillas* (equating to 120 days) usually in another country;
> - Year long tour – this is for the most devoted tablighi and usually consists of tavelling by foot, from mosque to mosque in a given country calling other Muslims to the work of the Jamaat. (Hasani 1982: 772)

This structure of Tablighi tours is well documented by Tablighi writers (Elias 2004; Kandhlawi 2007b). Elias comments that the TJ's adoption of these time frames is well grounded in the *hadith*. With tours lasting 3 days, justification is taken from the Prophet instructing a number of his companions to go to certain tribes, present them with the case for Islam and then stay among them for three days allowing them time to contemplate the choices (Elias 2004: 15). Three days is not just a period of time when those being proselytised should consider their options, but also a time when those on mission should contemplate their own commitment to the faith and to the movement.[56] As already seen, Mohammad spent 10 days in Taaif for *Dawah*, whilst the justification for 40 days is

[54] Of the several hundred people at the first TJ meeting this author went to, only a small number of people (possibly 10-15) volunteered to go out on Tablighi tour.
[55] This is based on my observation research at the Markaz. It should be noted that due to the Markaz Ilyas being one of the main TJ centres in the UK it is likely to have a much higher level of volunteers than 'ordinary' TJ mosques as people from all over the UK come here to listen to talks and volunteer.
[56] Another justification for the three day option as a method is that the Prophet Jonah 'stayed in the belly of a whale for 3 days and three nights' completely focused on praying to God (Elias 2004: 16).

taken from the fact that Moses was instructed to spend 40 days on Mt. Sinai (Elias 2004: 17-18).

Ilyas' most extraordinary contribution was to organise *jamaats* whose disciplined members, fired with religious zeal leading lives of piety, simplicity and abstinence, traveled far and wide 'acquiring and imparting Islamic knowledge, inviting the attention of people towards Islamic practices, spreading the message of Allah' (Hasan 1997: 318). Each member of the *jamaat* is responsible for paying their own way on the tours, they are encouraged to share in the cooking, cleaning and other menial tasks which they would usually not engage in whilst at home (Mayaram 1997: 229). This, much like in the Mormon tradition, was to serve as a training ground for developing the character and of missionaries and 'seen as helping to qualify men as better husbands and fathers' (Davies 2000: 195). Ilyas' strategy was to persuade Muslims that they themselves, however little book learning they had, could go out in groups, approaching even the *ulama*, to remind them to fulfill their ritual obligations (Metcalf 1982: xiii). By following correct codes of Islamic practice and ritual they would inspire others to see the benefits of the movement as a corrective process bringing people and their lives closer to the path of Allah - serving to empower and provide them with the necessary knowledge of the means to salvation.

Whilst TJ's preaching tours have become the most common method of advancing the movement and fulfilling Ilyas' six-points, in recent years the movement's congregations (or *ijtima*) have come to symbolise another key feature and method. Congregational gatherings rake place in a number of different ways and at different levels. Congregations take place on the national and international level, with the annual TJ meeting in India,

Pakistan and Bangladesh having the largest gathering of Muslims outside the *Hajj* (and sometimes exceeding the *Hajj*) coming from all over the world (Reetz 2004: 298; Hicks 2009; Perlez 2007b; LapidoMedia 2010). These international events not only attract millions of lay people, but also the world's television and press as well as presidents and government ministers. Events follow, albeit on a grander scale, what occurs during tablighi tours. People bring their own bedding, cooking utensils and provisions and are expected to attend talks around the six-points, network and learn from each other, whilst at the same time renewing their commitment to further preaching tours. Even though these international 'grand national' meetings attract millions of people, Reetz questions the extent to which the majority of those attending are actually committed Tablighis. Reetz notes that the closing prayers of these meetings have a special social significance in that they confer a blessing from learned and respected *Maulanas* on those attending and thus attracting swarms of locals seeking blessings, in a culture where this is still very much seen as sacred (Reetz 2008: 103).

On a more local level each Tablighi *markaz* is expected to hold a weekly congregation with talks and readings based on the 6 points. This is primarily aimed at the Muslims in the local area and so serves as a community orientation meeting. A further method utilised at these meetings is that regular Tablighi attendees bring food, which at the end of the meeting is shared creating an atmosphere of hospitality increasing social communication and networking opportunities. What remains, however, is that TJ just as with Mormons, is in essence a missionary movement and therefore difficult to conceive of outside of this ethos. Tablighis as with many other missionaries, give themselves to living in a highly controlled fashion with a seeming total dedication to spreading the truth of their faith. It is this controlled and structured living in the face of what is perceived to

be a society in free-fall that will have contributed to the continued growth of the organisation, and which may prove difficult in fostering a climate of change in the methods of TJ.

The next chapter, drawing upon the historical contexts outlined above, will focus on the establishment and development of the TJ in Britain. It will highlighting how movement leaders have been able to draw upon and reinterpret history, traditions and ideologies as a means to adaptation in shifting socio-political contexts.

5. Muslims and Tablighis in Britain: Adapting to Shifting Contexts

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is split into three distinct yet interconnected sections. The first builds on previous chapters through providing an historical overview of the establishment of Muslim communities in Britain. The second focuses on the establishment of TJ in Britain, particularly the Tablighi community in London. The establishment of TJ in Britain will be placed into the wider context of the development of Muslim communities here, allowing for a greater consideration of the way in which intra-Muslim community relations work. The third section explores ways in which shifts in the socio-political context of Britain have affected Muslim community interactions with the wider society – including an analysis of the concepts of multiculturalism and community cohesion.

A brief examination of the history and development of Muslims in Britain will be presented, although a significant body of literature already exists on this topic (Lewis 1994; Bari 2005; Hellyer 2007; Lewis 2007; Hellyer 2009; Ansari 2009; Hopkins and Gale 2009; Gest 2010; Gilliat-Ray 2010; Saggar 2010). An exploration of the expansion of TJ from the Indian subcontinent to Britain (and the west), the circumstances under which the first Tablighi communities were formed here as well as the early goals of the movement in Britain will be outlined. The purpose of this is two-fold. The first is to analyse the degree to which colonial experiences in South Asia have impacted upon how the movement interprets and consequently defines its situation in Britain today, and the second is to establish a base from which to analyse the level to which TJ in London may have adapted over time.

Of importance to the chapter will be assertions based on observations from the movement's headquarter mosque in Dewsbury, that TJ is isolationist in nature and disengaged from wider non-Tablighi communities there – an image that the movement in London is trying to battle. The importance of such allegations are that they are critical to the success or failure of the movement's ambitions in London especially since the emergence of social and community cohesion as the government's preferred policy for dealing with minority and especially Muslim communities. Following Islamically inspired attacks on 11 September in the US and London in 2005, the context for Muslim communities has dramatically shifted. Islam has become securitised meaning that actions of Muslim groups have come under closer scrutiny and often viewed with suspicion. It is in this context that TJ's interactions over building its proposed new mosque will have to be viewed.

An examination of the establishment of a Tablighi community in London using new data from a senior Tablighi leader not incorporated into previous studies of the movement will help to provide an historical account from TJ's perspective as to how the movement has developed in London (and further a field). This highlights TJ as a diverse movement across the different countries in which it operates, showing its ability to adapt to local contexts within those different countries. This chapter brings many of the historical debates surrounding TJ up-to-date, as well as situating these in Britain's shifting socio-political contexts, so that ensuing chapters may pay a more focused examination of TJ's situation in London.

5.2.1 Muslims in Britain: An Historic Overview

Britain, due to its colonial presence on the Indian subcontinent, has for a long time had contact and interaction with Islam(s) and Muslim populations. These populations however were for the most part in foreign lands, part of Britain's exotic, expansive and diverse empire. H.A. Hellyer has noted that much of the current scholarship on Muslims in Britain is analysed through this colonial lens, but argues that in fact Britain's interactions with Muslim communities pre-dates the colonial age. Hellyer traces the settlement of small Muslim communities in the British Isles since the Seventh Century, as well as noting that during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, England had a good relationship with the Muslim state of Morocco – in fact more cordial than with some other European powers such as Spain (Hellyer 2009: 145-7). This challenge to the dominant strand of history whereby Britain's contact with Muslim people has been presented as somewhat alien serves to show that Muslim communities in Britain are not an entirely modern phenomenon, even though the numbers of Muslims in Britain at the moment is significantly larger than at any time in the past. Indeed, due to Britain's position as a naval power with large and active ports, some Muslims, originally seafaring Yemenis had settled here (in the cities of Liverpool and Cardiff) during the Nineteenth Century (Saggar 2010: 34; Hellyer 2009: 148; Ansari 2009: 37), but it was not until the end of WWII that Britain saw an influx of immigration, including that of many Muslims, that would start to alter the demographics of the British population.

Muslims, since the end of the Second World War in 1945, and the crumbling of Britain's 'age of empire' (Hobsbawm 2003), have come to form an increasing part of the British population, being the largest religious minority group in the UK (see Table 1 below).

Following the immense devastation caused by the war, both in terms of loss of life as well as destruction to industries and manufacturing, the British state had an economic incentive to encourage the migration of foreign workers to help reconstruct British cities as well as take jobs that British people did not want (Siddiqui 2001: 185). The most obvious candidates to be drafted in to help with the post war reconstruction effort were subjects of the British Empire and Commonwealth. Indeed, important to the immigration of 'minorities' to Britain was the British Nationality Act of 1948 – one of the most liberal pieces of legislation to have ever been passed in Britain on citizenship and immigration. The Act allowed for any one of the 800 million subjects of the British Empire to live and work in Britain without needing a visa – as such any subject of the Crown, whether colonial or not was to enjoy the same civil and legal rights as subjects of the Crown born in Britain (Fetzer and Soper 2005: 27). The irony should not be lost that these Imperial subjects were invited and encouraged to migrate to Britain, and in most cases were and continue to be a vital part of (re)building a post-war modern Britain.

The primary reason for migration to Britain for most people, whether Muslim or not, (and it is important to note that in fact during this period emphasis was not on the religion of the minorities in question but rather on ethnicity)[57], in the post-war period was economic (Rex 1979; Ansari 2009). An example of this is that wages for labouring jobs in Britain in the early 1960s stood at over 30 times those offered in similar jobs in Pakistan, meaning that working in Britain could be relatively lucrative (Lewis 1994: 16). Initially it had been single Muslim men who arrived in Britain with the idea of working, earning a sum of money and then returning home in a strong financial position, establishing themselves in society and providing for their families. By the early 1960s

[57] The emphasis on delineation of communities in terms of religion as opposed to primarily that of ethnicity has been a relatively modern phenomenon, especially so since 9/11.

however, economic migrants to Britain from South Asia (mainly Pakistan, Bangladesh and India) increased dramatically, with two key reasons cited. The first reason was in order to pre-empt the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. This Act was to alter the British Nationality Act of 1948 closing the door on automatic entry into the UK of Commonwealth citizens.[58] This was in response to a heavy influx of immigrants to Britain since 1948, which had propelled the Conservative Party, and especially the Monday Club, a group affiliated to the Conservatives but to the right of the party, to argue in favour of a system permitting only those with government issued employment vouchers (of which there were a limited number) to settle and work in Britain.[59] Bari notes that by the mid 1950s there was intense debate in Britain as to the impact of black immigration on housing, the welfare state, crime and other social problems' with the 1958 riots in Notting Hill, London and in some areas of Nottingham paving the way for 'the development of racilaised politics in Britain' (Bari 2005:28-9). The second reason was that there was an increase of wives and other dependents choosing to join their husbands in Britain. Linked to the Act of 1962, spouses and dependants of those already working Britain wanted to ensure that they could settle with their relatives who were already there before the new legislation introduced complications (Lewis 1994: 17).

It was not until dependents (that is wives and children) of Muslim men began to join them in the 1960s and 1970s as part of a process that led to a more stable and permanent settlement, an indication that Britain would not be just a temporary abode, but rather home for the long term, that demands for Islamic institutions among Muslims in Britain began to grow. Authors such as Hellyer have noted that this period can be seen as the end of the "myth of return" – migrant communities, both Muslims and otherwise, were on the

[58] See http://www.britishcitizen.info/CIA1968.pdf (accessed 22/11/2008)
[59] http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/commonwealth-immigration-control-legislation.htm (accessed: 28/06/2011)

whole here to stay (Hellyer 2009: 154). The education of Muslim children became a pressing need, as did maintaining a Muslim identity. Migrating to Britain from different parts of the Empire or Commonwealth would have entailed a dramatic cultural shock for many of the individuals, as during this time there would have been little or no multicultural provisions – mosques and other Islamic institutions had yet to be established, and with *halal* meat and traditional spices used in South Asian cuisine difficult to come by. Interest in religious matters, according to Nielsen, had been minimal among the male migrant workers living in boarding houses – apart from avoiding non-*halal* meat, there was little time to focus on spiritual matters (Nielsen 1987: 387). With the arrival of their dependents this was to change.

It was in this context, among the newly arrived Muslims of the South Asian subcontinent, that TJ was able to initially disseminate its ideology, and establish itself as a presence in British society, helping to build mosques, holding meetings and educating Muslims in the way of Islam much as they had done in Mewat (Faust 2000: 140-1). For TJ, a movement that had arisen at the height of British colonialism in India, the myths and memories of the desire to spread the faith and set themselves on a morally superior path to their colonial masters will have still resonated in the 1960s British context – a period when many in society were awakening to a cultural and sexual revolution (Lent 2001). The desire to provide for the needs of Muslim communities spurred a marathon of institution building, with importance placed on establishing mosques and religious schools. TJ in Britain, in its early history was actively involved in establishing and shaping new Islamic institutions – something which the London TJ in the current context of wanting to construct their new mosque may draw upon as an important and resonating factor. TJ saw Britain as the new Mewat, a land in which Islam had to be built, and taking the same

methods used in Mewat gave importance to building mosques – with the mosque being the centre of Tablighi expansion. This is a fact that should remain at the forefront of understanding why the construction of the new mosque in London is so important to TJ.

5.2.2 Muslims in Britain: The Current Situation

Since that time, Muslims in Britain have come to form one of the key religious communities with the chart below capturing the religious diversity of Britain in 2001. Whilst these figures are dated and soon to be replaced by the new census information recorded in 2011, they do serve to provide a snapshot of religious diversity in the UK at the time. Whilst the situation of many Muslims in Britain is improving, traditionally these communities have been rather disadvantaged in socio-economic terms, as well as underperforming in the educational system and workforce. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) highlighted that many Pakistani and Bangladeshis living in Britain (both predominantly Muslim communities) remain underprivileged. Among other issues, the MCB notes that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are amongst the poorest ethnic groups in the UK; that Pakistani and Bangladeshi men on average are likely to earn £150 per week less than white men and that over two thirds of Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are living below the line of relative poverty (MCB 2003). Having said this, in the past decade or so, British Muslim communities have become increasingly integrated into "mainstream" society with a number of Muslims voted in to the House of Commons as Members of Parliament, a number appointed to the House of Lords as Peers, and many holding positions in local councils and other decision making bodies. Of course, there is still some way to go before a representative balance is achieved, but steps in the right direction have been made.

Table 1: The population of Great Britain by Religion, UK Census, April 2001

	Total population (numbers)	(percentages)	Non-Christian religious population (numbers)
Christian	41,014,811	71.8	
Muslim	1,588,890	2.8	57.9
Hindu	558,342	1.0	18.3
Sikh	336,179	0.6	11.0
Jewish	267,373	0.5	8.7
Buddhist	149,157	0.3	4.9
Any other religion	159,167	0.3	5.2
All non-Christian Religious population	3,059,108	5.4	100
No Religion	8,596,488	15.1	
Religion not stated	4,433,520	7.8	
All Population	57,103,927	100	

Source: The Office for National Statistics website (www.statistics.gov.uk)

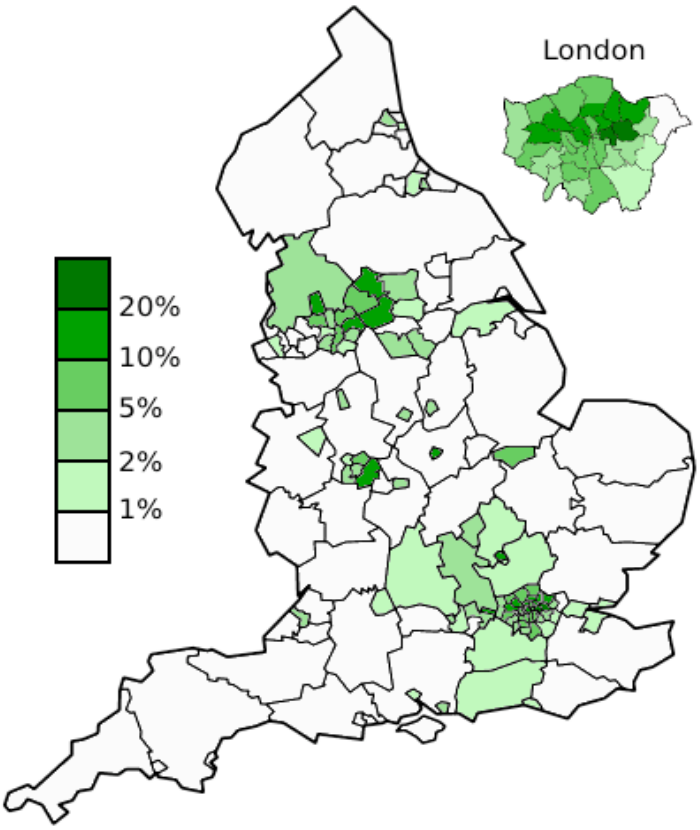
The 2001 UK census was unique in that it was the first time since 1851 that questions of religious identity were asked – with the one in 1851 only interested in church attendance (Peach 2006: 629). Table 1 indicates that the majority of the British population still regard themselves as Christian. This, however, does not capture how many are practicing Christians, nor the degree or depth of that faith. The second most definite category are those who do not classify themselves as religious at all – forming 15 % of the population. The census established that there were 1.6 million Muslims residing in the UK – roughly 3% of the British population, making Islam the second largest religion in Britain. The

Census also confirmed that the majority of the UK's Muslim population originate from the Indian subcontinent, 'with nearly 68% from Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds' (ChangeInstitute 2009a: 9).

It is important to note that since the 2001 Census, there have been significant changes in the demographics of the UK population. For example the population of those originating from Pakistan in England and Wales rose from 728,400 in 2001 to 1,007,400 in 2009 and for Bangladeshis from 287,000 to 392,200 (ONS 2011: 2). Even though figures on ethnicity do not necessarily prove an accurate guide for religious practise, it is widely accepted that the majority of those originating from Pakistan and Bangladesh and residing in the UK do affiliate with the Muslim faith (ChangeInstitute 2009b, 2009c). Looking at statistics on religion, it is claimed that the Muslim population in Britain has grown by more than 500,000 to 2.4 million since 2005 (Kerbaj 2009). If this is indeed the case, the Muslim population in Britain will have multiplied 10 times faster than any other group in society – although as Kaufmann notes, by 2030 the fertility rates of European Muslims are expected to resemble those of the majority population (Kaufmann 2010).

Even though the 2001 census did not record the depth of religiosity across the population, the 4th Public Studies Institute (PSI) survey of race relations in Britain did note the centrality of religion to people's lives, concluding that religion has a more central role in the lives of Muslim citizens as opposed any of the other major UK religions. The survey found that '74% of Muslims, 46% of Sikhs, and 43% of Hindus' reported that religion was 'very important to them compared with just 11%' of Church of England attendees (Modood et al. 1997: 310). This was certainly observable with every member of TJ that was interviewed or spoken with in the context of this research.

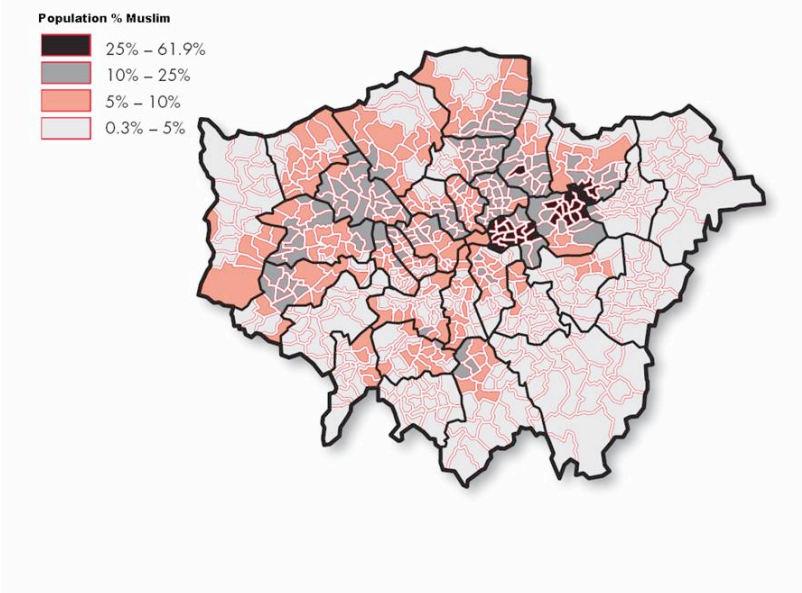
Map 1: Muslims in England



Source: Map of Muslims in Britain, www.scienceblogs.com, March, 2009

As is shown in Map 1, the majority of Muslims in England are concentrated in the boroughs of London (approximately 40%), cities of the West Midlands (approximately 14%), the North West of the country (approximately 13.5%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (approximately 12.5 %). The map does not include figures for Scotland and Wales as they have their own devolved government structures that are responsible for the separate compilation of such data. The fact of the matter, however, is that three key cities in the UK – London, Birmingham and Bradford – account for over half (51.7%) of the combined Muslim population of England, Scotland and Wales.

Map 2: Muslims in London



Source: **Office of National Statistics Website, www.statistics.gov.uk**

The majority of Muslims residing within the UK (40%) live in England's capital and surrounding areas - Greater London. Due to the density of Muslims in London, it is important to have a more detailed understanding of the Muslim population here, not least because this is the main site for this research. Map 2 (above) shows that whilst London may have a strong Muslim population, some boroughs have larger populations than others. The strongest concentrations of Muslims are found in Tower Hamlets and Newham. There are also sizeable Muslim populations in the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest, Hackney, Brent, Ealing and Redbridge. Table 2 (below) further lists the Muslim populations of each of the London Boroughs as recorded in the 2001 Census.

Table 2: Muslims according to London Borough Council, 2001 Census

Ethnicity and Religion (ordered by %)			
Muslim			
London Borough	**Muslim pop'n**	**% of Total**	**Ranking of %**
Tower Hamlets	71389	36.4	1
Newham	59293	24.3	2
Waltham Forest	32902	15.1	3
Brent	32290	12.3	5
Ealing	31033	10.3	10
Redbridge	28487	11.9	6
Hackney	27908	13.8	4
Enfield	26306	9.6	11
Haringey	24371	11.3	9
Camden	22906	11.6	8
Westminster	21346	11.8	7
Hounslow	19378	9.1	12
Barnet	19373	6.2	18
Croydon	17642	5.3	22
Southwark	16774	6.9	16
Harrow	14915	7.2	15
Lambeth	14344	5.4	21
Islington	14259	8.1	14
Wandsworth	13529	5.2	23
Kensington and Chelsea	13364	8.4	13
Lewisham	11491	4.6	25
Hammersmith and Fulham	11314	6.8	17
Hillingdon	11258	4.6	24
Merton	10899	5.8	19
Greenwich	9199	4.3	27
Barking and Dagenham	7148	4.4	26
Kingston upon Thames	5777	3.9	28
Bromley	4926	1.7	31
Sutton	4103	2.3	29
Richmond upon Thames	3887	2.3	30
Bexley	3069	1.4	32
Havering	1800	0.8	33
City of London	403	5.6	20

An indicator of the vibrancy of religious communities is that of worship provisions. London has amongst the best provisions in terms of mosques and Islamic institutions for its Muslim communities. The number of mosques in the UK has grown considerably in the past decade. In 1963, there were a total of 13 mosques registered in the UK, by 1975 this number has risen to 99, and by 1985 there were 338. Table 3 (below) categorises current mosques in terms of factions, listing the number of these mosques both locally to

the London metropolitan area and by nationally. Even though the table below is one that the UK government also uses (ChangeInstitute 2010), it is not without its problems. For example, the table's estimate of Muslims in London is inadequate, with many sources now indicating that there are more than 1 million Muslims in London (Pew 2011). The table also underestimates the number of *Shi'a* Muslims (Rizvi 2012). The important point, however, is that by far, the majority of Sunni mosques in Britain, and specifically in London, are oriented towards the Deobandi strand of Islam, including TJ. The number of mosques controlled by each Sunni faction of Islam below also highlights the distinct migration patterns of Muslims in the post-colonial period in the UK.

Table 3: Mosque factions in the UK and London (2007/8)

Faction	Typical Ethnicity	All UK Masjids	London Masjids	London Congregati-ons	Estimated London population
Deobandi Masjids	*mainly Asian*	approx 700-800	192	115,000	317,000
Bareilvi Masjids	*Asian & Turkish*	approx 350	52	43,000	121,000
'Maudoodi' Masjids	*Asian*	60	7	3,200	9,000
Salafi Masjids	*diverse ethnicity*	60	20	12,600	35,000
Other mainstream Sunni	*Arab and African*	32	16	30,000	85,000
All Sunni Masjids		1,520	298	205,000	
Sunni population		96%	94%		570,000
All Shi'a Masjids	*mainly Asian, some Iraqi, Irani*	67	20	9,000	
Shi'a population		4%	6%		36,000

Source: www.MuslimsInBritain.org

5.3.1 Tablighi Jamaat in Britain

Following from the historical account of the TJ in Chapter 5, this section demonstrates the practical implications of the movement's expansion to the west, and especially Britain. It is important to understand the development of TJ in Britain as separate to the overall historical development of the movement because once in Britain the movement started to be shaped by local contexts, in part accounting for why TJ has developed different strategies in different British cities. With the death of Ilyas in 1944 and the subsequent ascent of his son, Maulana Yusuf as the movement's second international *amir*, TJ began to expand the geographical scope of its activities. Within two decades TJ had expanded throughout Asia, Africa, Europe and North America (Alexiev 2005).

Britain is currently one of the main foci of the group's activities in the west, although the movement has in reality been successful in many European countries with strong Tablighi communities in France, Germany and Spain. It is in Britain, and especially London with the desire of establishing what movement leaders hope to be a new European headquarter mosque, that has brought most attention to the movement (Doward 2006a, 2006b; Johnston 2006; Sugden 2007). London has a special significance to TJ, as the city was selected as part of a strategic triumvirate of regions – Delhi, Mecca and London – from which the Tablighi version of Islam could be propagated to wider geographical reaches (Gaborieau 2000). This was because of Britain's then position as the colonial power in South Asia, one of the world super powers at the time as well as a prime location for South Asian migration after the end of WWII. Some commentators have gone as far as to argue that this desire of establishing a mosque in London will function as the basis for the conversion of Europe to Islam (Alexiev 2005; Gaborieau 1999).

Although the Muslim population of London is far greater than that of any other city in Britain[60], TJ tends to be better established in the North of England as can be seen from the predominance of Tablighi regional centres there.[61] The most important of these is the HQ *Markaz* of the movement at Dewsbury, which also incorporates a private Islamic boarding school for boys. Given that the TJ have expressed that their proposed mosque in London serve a similar function to the *Markaz* at Dewsbury, it is important that an overview of this mosque is gained. Much of the opposition to the TJ's mosque construction project in London is based on observations from the Dewsbury *Markaz* and its surrounding area.

From visiting Dewsbury, it is clear that the Mosque is the centre of the Tablighi community there, and in a sense the community around the mosque has become TJ. The Tablighi's mosque at Dewsbury has been characterised as imposing and separatist – all around it are signs that warn against photography and that unauthorised visitors are not allowed. This has led some to comment on the implications of building mosques in certain communities, which could lead to 'white flight' or the ghettoisation of the surrounding area (Kepel 2000; Norfolk 2006). Others have argued that it is not Islamic architecture that changes the character of an area but rather specific Islamic movements that have inward looking philosophies. Still others argue that the situation is more complicated than this, and that it is a feature of immigrant communities wanting to live in close proximity with others of the same ethnic background (Barnard and Turner 2011; Hoffman 1998). Indeed recent research has found that it is difficult for South Asians to move into white neighbourhoods, and cite examples of people who had tried to do so, but

[60] www.statistics.gov.uk
[61] The main Tablighi Centres in the UK can be found in Dewsbury, Birmingham, Leicester, Blackburn, Glasgow and London

due to isolation returned to areas with higher populations from their own ethnic backgrounds. A report by the Change Institute argues that there is usually a feeling that 'no matter how much minorities try, the majority community will never accept them – "if they don't want us why should we bother?" (ChangeInstitute 2009c: 48). In the case of Dewsbury it is likely to be a combination of all three.

Sikand argues that TJ, 'excluded from the dominant British society in the midst of whom they live, see society as ungodly and immoral and thus respond eagerly to the calls for social separatism and insularity' (Sikand 2002: 232). The adoption of a higher moral ethical code in comparison to their colonial masters in India has been intensified in Britain by TJ – both as a way to find comfort in a society that is generally viewed as immoral, but also to reinforce boundaries of purity. This poses questions for community cohesion in Britain, bringing into question the extent to which TJ's stance of openness and inclusion in London is a genuine transformation of the movement.

The existing literature on TJ notes that it was not until after the death of Ilyas, and under the guidance of his son and successor, Muhammad Yusuf, that they started its operations in the UK. TJ leaders had always been serious about Britain becoming a key area of activity, with London selected as a site of importance since the early years after the inception of the movement (Gaborieau 2000). Even though the movement initially had more success in the north of England, so important was the spread of the mission to the whole of Britain that Dr. Zakir Hussain, who was later to become the President of India, was sent as one of its coordinators (Sikand 2002: 217-18). As TJ activists were at the forefront of helping to establish mosques and other Islamic institutions in Britain, the initial goals were threefold:

> To impart knowledge of the basic rituals and beliefs of Islam to the children; to combat western and Christian cultural influences; and to instil in children a spirit of dedication of Islam, which could later be channelled for Tablighi activity' (Sikand 2002: 220).

These early goals are still at the heart of TJ's objectives leading to allegations that TJ are a separatist or supremacist movement. As Sikand has argued, 'the Tablighi ethos works to minimise contacts with people of other faiths, withdrawing from the wider society to protect Islam from the threat of secularism and materialism' (Sikand 2002: 232). Whilst this may have been the case at the time Sikand was writing, and indeed may still be the case with TJ in the North of England, the situation at least on paper has changed in London where TJ leaders are making an effort to engage with the wider community as means of promoting their construction project. This has included talk of inter-faith activities, as well as the proposed mosque being for the whole community, and not just Muslims or Tablighi Muslims (Mohammed 2011).

The first large gathering or *ijtima* of TJ in Britain took place over the Christmas period towards the end of the 1950s. The gathering was a 4 day event 'attended by around 100 people, and participating in it were *jamaats* from Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield, besides activists from London itself' (Sikand 2002: 221). The aims of this gathering were to provide opportunities 'for activists from across the UK to meet up and plan for the future expansion of the movement' (Sikand 2002: 221). This gathering, as well as similar ones which took place on a regular basis thereafter were geared towards establishing a firm Tablighi presence in Britain, ensuring the movement had a network of mosques from which it could operate thus spreading the Tablighi tenants to all the Muslims of Britain. The first *amir* of the TJ in Britain, who was also at that time responsible in consultation with TJ headquarters in Nizamuddin for the TJ's activities in Europe, was a

first generation migrant - Hafiz Muhammad Ishaq Patel. It is reported that Patel came to Britain as an ordinary worker, but that when he was on *Hajj* came into contact with Yusuf, then the TJ's global *amir*, who:

> was apparently so impressed by his sincerity in the cause of Islam that he took him in front of the *ka'ba* and there offered supplications to Allah to make him the instrument of winning the whole of Britain to Islam (Ansari 2009: 348; Sikand 2002: 225; Lewis 1994: 135).

It was Patel who established the Tablighi community in Dewsbury, eventually leading to the construction of the movement's European HQ there, as well as encouraging regular visits from senior international Tablighi leaders such as Maulana Zakariyya. Indeed in 1979 Zakariyya visited Dewsbury and offered 'special supplications for its future success as the centre of tablighi activity in the west' (Sikand 2002: 225).

5.3.2 Tablighi Jamaat in London

Further to the already established research into the history of TJ in Britain this chapter utilised a new source that emerged as part of the Public Inquiry (see Chapter 8) in order to build upon and add to the current literature. Solad Sakandar Mohammed, a senior member of the London TJ, outlined as part of the movement's submission of evidence to the Public Inquiry a history of the movement. Mohammed noted that TJ in Britain was 'founded in 1944 at 448/450 Commercial Road, Whitechapel, London' and that the movement later moved to Christian Street in Aldgate East in 1979 'as a result of the redevelopment of our former premises by the local council' (Mohammed 2011: 4). This establishment of the movement in London is much earlier than previously thought, although the movement will only have had a small presence at this time. Mohammed explained to the Inquiry that the administrative centre of TJ in Britain is currently in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, and that TJ currently has six *Markaz* or main organisational

mosques in Britain - Dewsbury, Leicester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Blackburn and West Ham in London (Mohammed 2011: 4). This highlights that the main congregations of TJ are almost exclusively in the North of Britain, reflecting migration patterns of Tablighi Muslims to Britain. These *Markaz*, however, do not take into account the numerous other Tablighi affiliated mosques which fall under the direction of one of these regional *Markaz*, nor indeed the missionary activity of the TJ in the South of England. The Christian Street mosque in London is just one of these mosques and can currently accommodate up to 200 male worshippers at any given time.

Traditionally TJ in Britain has been particularly strong among lower, and lower-middle class Muslims possibly due to the TJ's distaste for scholarship, thus appealing to those sections of the British Muslim population that have not received a formal education (Sikand 2002: 231). Indeed, whilst attending one of the Thursday evening gatherings at the Abbey Mills Centre, the *bayan* centred around how education should not be used as an excuse for not going on *jamaat*, and that there was more reward in going on *jamaat* than in education:

> Today we run from the religion and we learn science. What is the study of science of living things and un-living things? We study the science, and those who learn the smallest in bacteria and atoms are "Ooh the Professors!" [said in derogatory fashion] we respect those who learn the smallest thing of matter. But those who learn ALLAH and the *kalima* we don't respect...everybody wants certificate but what good is this in the end? Go in the path of Allah. Its this that will provide for you! [62]

The Tablighi ethos has traditionally attracted British Muslims who, in their social and economic dealings, have had little interaction with non-Muslims and the wider British society, such as for instance, the unemployed, and small Muslim shopkeepers in largely Muslim residential areas, people who 'have little hope of rising up within the existing

[62] Thursday 19 August 2010 Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

system, or simply people who have dropped out of the system' (Sikand 2002: 231).[63] Having said this, one is able to meet university students, teachers and other very socially engaged people at Tablighi gatherings in London.

Whilst many of TJ's adherents have traditionally come from a lower or lower middle class, South Asian, older background, evidence from ethnographic research at the Abbey Mills mosque suggests that this is changing. The gatherings attract a mixed selection of men – including different ethnicities showing that TJ has to some extent managed to expand from its predominantly South Asian base. This observation from the research has been reinforced by a survey carried out on the profile of the current users of the mosque by the survey group ECORYS. The survey was carried out over a Thursday and then a Friday gathering in 2010 and included 426 responses. The results of this indicate a strong trend to a youthful population (41% 20-29 years of age) and one that is ethnically mixed (Pakistani 35%, Bangladeshi 32%, Black African 17%, Indian 11%) (ERCOYS 2010: 12-13).

Whilst not taking into account even half of the users of the facility, and the probability that many more young people participated, the results are the first and only official source of the composition of the attendees of the mosque. Whilst the results in part correlate with what has been observed, it is still important to note that the majority of adherents are older than the survey suggests, and even though an increasing number of people from different ethnic backgrounds may use the facility, the majority still originate from a South Asian background. TJ cannot be viewed as still being the same organisation

[63] This is one of the reasons as to why the Tablighi Jamaat has been seen as an ideal and fertile recruiting ground for potential terrorists.

that it was in the 1980s and 1990s and that at least in London, the movement has managed to attract a wider following.[64]

Two observations remain important in exploring the extent to which TJ as a movement in London has been going through a transformation. The first is the assertion that the attraction of TJ in the UK has been:

> Its role of a surrogate family for people who had been uprooted from their homes and communities in rural south Asia and had been thrust into an unknown and generally hostile environment. The closed circles of the TJ provided them with a familiar South Asian atmosphere, where they could spend at least a few days in the company of their co-religionists from their own countries of origin, away from the hostile host population among whom they otherwise had to live and work (Sikand 2002: 224).

The second is this,

> What is particularly striking about the TJ in Britain, and in the west, is how a movement such as the TJ, known for its firm commitment to a conservative understanding of Islam, has not just managed to survive in what it sees as a hostile environment, but has actually flourished despite all odds' (Sikand 2002: 214).

The remainder of this thesis argues that TJ in London has been successful despite the odds because it not only continues to provide a safe environment for its adherents, but also because it has been adept at adapting to local contexts and challenges ensuring the growth and success of the movement in Britain. This process of continuous transformation has been spurred on by the desire to construct the movement's new mosque – a process demanding interaction and engagement with the wider society and government, and which the movement had avoided in the past.

[64] It is also interesting to note that the leadership of the movement in recent years has come from a mainly middle class and well-educated background. The *amir* at the Glasgow Markaz, for example is a surgeon, and members of the *shura* council at London include successful businessmen.

5.4.1 Understanding the Context

As has already been argued, it is difficult to understand issues pertaining to Muslim communities in Britain and Europe without understanding the contexts in which these communities function. The context over the decades has shifted – from ethnic tensions to multiculturalism to an emphasis on social and community cohesion. On coming to power the New Labour government of Tony Blair (1997) sought to move away from a Britain that was rife with ethnic tensions (partly as a result of the Salman Rushdie Affair) and instead emphasised the plural and dynamic character of British society (McRoy 2006: 10).[65] New Labour chose to speak of a 'cool Britannia', of re-branding Britain, of Britain being a 'young country', a 'mongrel nation' and a 'chicken tikka masala-eating nation' (Modood 2007). This was part of the process of multiculturalism – a policy encouraging the promotion of diverse ethnic and religious groups that make up a significant minority of the British population. At best multiculturalism can be described as the 'form of integration that best meets the normative implications of equal citizenship, and under our present post 9/11, post 7/7 circumstances stands the best chance of succeeding (Modood 2007). More generally, however, multiculturalism came to mean the political accommodation of non-white, mainly post-immigration minorities (Modood 2007).[66]

5.4.2 Multiculturalism and the Impact of Shifting Contexts

[65] The Salman Rushdie affair erupted in Britain after the publication of Salman Rusdie's novel "The Satanic Verses" in 1988. British South Asian Muslims allied themselves with transnational Islam embodied by Ayatollah Khomeni against Rushdie and British law calling Rushdie an apostate for derogatory descriptions of Mohammad, burning Rushdie's book and calling for his blood. (Asad 1990).

[66] Multiculturalism has also been defined in the following ways: Roy Jenkins had defined it as a form of integration: 'not a flattening process of uniformity but cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance (Rex 1979). Tahir Abbas comments, multiculturalism is best understood 'neither as a political doctrine nor a philosophical school with a distinct theory but as a perspective or a way of viewing human life' (Abbas 2005a). Bhikhu Parekh has defined a multicultural society as one which 'includes several distinct cultural, ethnic and religious communities, and needs to find ways of reconciling two equally legitimate and sometimes conflicting demands' (Parekh 1998).

This new way of thinking which dominated the 1997-2005 period and which generally allowed for improved opportunities for ethnic minorities in Britain was to change in the aftermath of 9/11. In particular Muslims more than any other group would be branded as fanatics and terrorist (Wheatcroft 2006) creating tension in communities and increasingly Muslims seen as the 'other' (Huntington 1997), in some ways returning to a similar situation to that following the Rushdie Affair. Croft has termed this as the "othering of Muslims". Muslims become a separate entity as different from the rest of society, a group that is to be feared:

> Fear is a powerful weapon when it comes to the securitization of an identity. It's a useful enemy to help us think of who we are – which usually is superior to others' (Croft in Jenkins 2011).

The year 2001 will be remembered in Britain not only for the events of 11 September in the US, but for the worst outbreak of urban violence and civil disturbance in England since the 1980s. There were riots in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in May, June and July (Bagguley and Hussain 2005) with the perception being that it was the Muslim population of those cities being the problematic element (McRoy 2006: 28-9). The significance of this is that multiculturalism was seen as having failed to adequately integrate minorities into society, and that a new policy would be needed to ensure that minorities living in the west would adequately integrate into the values of the west (what ever they may be). It is in this changing context of government policy to Muslim communities that the efforts of the TJ to construct their new mosque must be viewed.

Whilst in the past multicultural policies may have aided a Muslim community in the construction of a landmark project, the new context was to create an atmosphere in which such schemes were viewed with suspicion. Significantly the then Commissioner for

Racial Equality, Trevor Philips, argued that 'Multiculturalism has helped to segregate communities more effectively than racism' (Malik 2001). This sparked a major debate in the media over the role of multiculturalism, as well as a need for a clarification on how immigrants and minorities in the west would be treated in the future. This would have profound consequences on TJ's project, which became associated with the promoting of segregation and division. By 2004, according to Modood, it was common to read or hear that the challenge to Britishness today is the cultural separatism and self-imposed segregation of Muslim migrants and that a 'politically correct multiculturalism had fostered fragmentation rather than integration' (Modood 2007; West 2005). This discourse against the policy of multiculturalism, which the New Labour government had initially been so keen on, reached a new peak with the 7 July 2005 London bombings. The fact that most of the individuals involved were Muslims born and raised in Britain, a country that had afforded them or their parents refuge from persecution, poverty and freedom of worship, led many to conclude that multiculturalism had failed, or worse still, responsible for the bombings. (Modood 2007). It is in this context that TJ has been framed and in turn has tried to frame the debate over its mosque construction project.

The July bombings of 2005 in London were a catalyst in bringing about a profound re-evaluation of the policy of multiculturalism in Britain, a move to a policy of community cohesion as well as shift in the way the British public viewed Muslims. The bombings were even more significant for TJ, coming only the morning after the announcement that London had won the 2012 bid to host the Olympic Games, thus casting security concerns over the building of the TJ mosque which was to be just 'a stones throw' from the Olympics Stadium (Izzard 2008). Kepel observed that the bombers were 'children of Britain's own multicultural society' and that multiculturalism was the product of an

implicit social consensus between leftwing working-class movements and the public-school-educated political elite (Kepel 2005). Their alliance allowed one side to monitor immigrant workers and the other to secure their votes, through their religious leaders, at election time – 'the July bombings have smashed this consensus to smithereens' (Kepel 2005). In other words, multiculturalism had failed to adequately accommodate Muslims into the mainstream of British society. The most damning declaration on multiculturalism, however, came again from Trevor Philips, who claimed that multiculturalism had once been useful but is now 'out of date' and makes 'a fetish of difference' instead of encouraging minorities to be British (Baldwin and Rozenberg 2004).

Further to the 7/7 attacks, a number of Islamically inspired attacks and riots in the UK and Europe have ignited passions, exacerbated feelings of division in communities and served to solidify negative views of Muslims. The murder of Theo Van Gogh, a Dutch film maker, in Amsterdam in 2004 by a Dutch-Moroccan (Dalrymple 2004); the controversy over the Danish cartoons that caused offence to Muslims worldwide (Belien 2005); the remarks made by Pope Benedict XVI in September 2006 (Benedict 2006); and, the comments by Jack Straw (MP and former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs) in Britain expressing concern over the increasing number of Muslim women in his constituency opting to wear the veil (Wainwright 2006), have all brought Muslims to the forefront and provoked a context of anxiety about the presence of large and visible minorities of Muslims in the west. The recent and much publicised efforts of Anjem Choudary, a fringe Islamist, aiming to impose "Shari'a Zones" in East London have also exacerbated the situation despite Muslim community leaders condemning his actions (Pieri 2012 fothcoming).

Of direct relevance to the case-study of TJ is that of the context of mosque construction projects. The building of mosques in Europe has been one of the arenas where the presence of Islam in the public sphere has become increasingly visible as more minarets start to diversify the skylines of cities.[67] There are plans to build several hundred new and often magnificent mosques throughout Europe including London, Cologne and Paris. More recently the proposals to build a mosque and Islamic cultural centre two blocs away from Ground Zero have sparked mass debate and controversy (Nocera and Goldsmith 2010; Schwartz 2010; Ghosh and Mich 2010; Rabinowitz 2010). Indeed, until recently the largest and possibly most controversial of these has been the proposed Tablighi "Mega-Mosque" in the East-end of London, initially designed to accommodate 70,000 worshippers (Steyn 2005). The debate surrounding the TJ mosque has since been matched by the proposed construction of the "Ground Zero" mosque re-opening the wounds of 9/11 and attracting vociferous debates both in the US and around the world. Architecture has become the field of a fierce ideological battle about the visibility of Europe's 16 million Muslims (Knofel 2008) with this now also being the case in the US.

5.4.3 Social and Community Cohesion

One cannot discuss the current context relating to British Muslim communities without making reference to the concept of social/community cohesion. The concern over community cohesion in Britain emerged as a distinct policy after the 2001 riots (Burnett 2004), and intensified in the aftermath of the July 2005 attacks in London and Glasgow. In the UK, the concept refers to situations where 'individuals are bound to one another by

[67] See chapter 7 in this thesis

common social and cultural commitments' (Lynch 2001). Moreover, in Britain, social cohesion has been closely linked to New Labour's concept of citizenship. That is, that a cohesive Britain requires that its citizens share a core value base and actively participate in the electoral process (Shukra 2004). This impacts on groups such as TJ that have traditionally remained apart from the political system. It has meant that such groups have struggled in communicating their needs and concerns to policy makers – although it has meant that groups have also had to adapt and start to engage with the political process. Although similar, distinctions have been made between social cohesion and community cohesion. Social cohesion, according to the Cantle Report can be found:

> In increasingly divided towns and cities where individuals are integrated into their local ethnic or religious based communities, and community cohesion, where participation is taking place across communities, knitting them together into a wider whole (Cantle 2001; Robinson 2005).[68]

It is community cohesion that is now central to many new planning policies and as such likely to effect any future proposal that the TJ has. Despite this new focus on cohesion, a report by the Change Institute on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government notes that:

> There continue to be a range of understandings of what greater integration and cohesion means and what is required for this to happen both on the part of minority communities and the host society, as well as different perceptions of how integrated specific communities are. Some longer established communities still do not feel that they are accepted or valued as part of British society and consider that the rhetoric of integration is underpinned by pressures for minority communities to be assimilated and absorbed rather than integrated (ChangeInstitute 2009a: 30).

One factor which has been closely connected to community cohesion is the concept of "Britishness". On the right wing of the political spectrum are, according to Modood,

[68] Another recent definition has come from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion stating that, 'in its best sense this implies: An integrated and cohesive community is one where there is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighborhood, city, region or country' (Singh 2007)

exclusivist, even racist notions of Britishness that claim that non-white people can never really be British. On the left of the spectrum are some who feel that there is something deeply wrong about rallying around the idea of Britain – that it is too racist, imperialist, militaristic and elitist – that the goal of seeking to be British is silly and demeaning to new migrants (Modood 2005). Yet, as Modood rightly argues, if the goal of wanting to be British is not a worthwhile goal for new migrants and their decedents, what then are they supposed to integrate into? (Modood 2005). If there is nothing strong, purposive and inspiring to integrate into, why bother with integration at all? We cannot, as Modood states, ask new Britons to integrate whilst at the same time exclaim that being British is a hollowed-out and meaningless project whose time has come to an end (Modood 2005).

It is important to include Muslims into this concept of Britishness recognising that integration is a two-way process, or as Croft states, what is needed is 'a process where we start including people who are British Muslims in 'our' identity and celebrate Muslim role models in positive ways' (Croft in Jenkins 2011). What we have now produces confusion, detracts from the process of integration, and ultimately leads to the break-up of community cohesion and creation of parallel societies – some of which have already been seen in the UK.[69] As such, an element of the current context of modern Britain in which Muslim groups have to operate is one of confusion and mixed signals, in turn creating a difficult atmosphere for Muslim groups to function in.

[69] Beeston and Dewsbury are but two examples.

5.4.4 Islamophobia

The final aspect needing to be analysed as forming part of the British context is the politics of fear following Islamically inspired terrorist attacks in the west (discussed above) as well as the link to "Islamophobia" which has become an increasingly topical discussion in the literature (Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2010a, 2010b; Allen 2010; Gottschalk and Greenberg 2007). Whilst the notion of an underlying current of Islamophibia as being inherently present in British society was discussed by Muslims in the period following the Rushdie Affair, it was not until the publication of the Runneymede Trust's report *Islamophobia – A Major Challenge for Us All,* that the phrase properly entered public discourse and discussion (Trust 1997). Books such as Edward Said's *Covering Islam* (Said 1981) and Melani McAlister's *Epic Encounters* (McAlister 2001) show the extent to which post-9/11 debates around what has become known as "Islamophobia" is a continuation of the durable 'anti-Muslim motifs that pervade Western cultures' (Shryock 2010: 21). The Runneymede Trust as has defined Islamophobia as:

> An unfounded hostility towards Islam as well as the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and...the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs (Trust 1997: 4)

Andrew Shryock has taken the definition further adding that the implications of Islamophobia are that it is often:

> Posed as the motivation behind acts of mosque vandalism, hate crimes against individuals thought to be Muslim, sensational press coverage of the "Muslim threat", the selective policing and surveillance of Muslim communities, and electoral campaign smears in which a candidate is linked to Muslim extremists...The latter claim is widely perceived to be a slur – not simply a mistake – and never a compliment – because the suspicion prevalent among even the most tolerant of bourgeois multiculturalists, that Islam is somehow antithetical to democratic values (Shryock 2010: 2)

Whilst these definitions and implications of Islamophobia highlight a concerning feature of European societies and especially the situation of Muslim citizens in those societies, there has also been much debate about the usefulness of the term "Islamophoboia". Caroline Cox and John Marks noted that:

> Some defenders of Islam have tried to shut down the sort of full and free discussion [about the role of Islam in society] which we expect in Western societies to be able to have about all systems of belief by accusing critics of 'Islamophobia' (Cox and Marks 2006: 104).

Andrew Gilligan, Daniel Pipes and Melaine Phillips have also all question the extent to which perhaps Islamophobia has now become a smoke screen to attack all those who raise questions about Islam (Phillips 2008; Gilligan 2010; Pipes 2005).

Aside from the academic discussions over the concept of Islamophobia, research on Muslim communities is showing clear evidence that many Muslims themselves feel that discrimination against Muslims is on the rise and that this is also proving a barrier to integration:

> All respondents feel that Islamophobia has increased markedly since 9/11 and the London bombings in July 2007, and that it is more difficult for minorities to integrate into a society that has increasingly made them feel less welcome (ChangeInstitute 2009a: 32)

One of the key institutions in Britain that has been identified as having elements of latent Islamophobia has been the media. The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) in its report on *Anti-Muslim Discrimination* devoted much space to the issue noting that Muslims regularly face animosity and prejudice with Muslims usually portrayed as 'violent extremists' (ICHR 2000: 5). The report makes the point that often discussions about Muslims in the press are sensationalised with 'persistent analogising of Muslims

with all that is despised in society' reinforcing the prejudice that all Muslims can be equated with a minority that have brought the community into disrepute (ICHR 2000: 25). This is something that Githens-Mazer and Lambert note in their report:

> Sections of the media have created a situation where the one serves to heighten the unfounded claims and anxieties of the other...using terms like "Tsunamis of Muslim immigration", and accuses Islam of being a fundamental threat to the "European way of life" (Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2010a: 7).

Research by the Change Institute has highlighted that many of their Muslim interviewees have expressed concern at the level of Islamophobia in the media with one commenting that, 'the British media makes it sound as if the whole Muslim community is rife with extremism – this is so far from the truth' (ChangeInstitute 2009b: 53). Islamic movements face difficulty engaging with the British press if the starting point for relations between the press and Muslim groups is already one of such imbalance. This will be a significant point when considering and analysing why TJ made the extraordinary move of hiring a secular public affairs company in 2007 to handle the movement's publicity and media image.

This chapter has built on the previous one through providing a history of the TJ in Britain. The chapter has presented the movement's goals for Britain since its migration here in 1944, as well as its demographics and core constituents. Through understanding the historical context of TJ in Britain, the next chapters can focus on the London branch of the movement and the way in which its leaders are seeking to adapt the movement as a means of gaining planning permission for their proposed new mosque. This also enables for a comparison of goals past and present, allowing for a clearer understanding as to how and why leaders in London are negotiating a change, and the extent to which this might have a wider transformative effect on TJ. The contextual issues explored in this

chapter will remain key to discussions in the following chapters. Context affects the way in which all movement leaders and members operate, with factors such as multiculturalism, social and community cohesion, Islamophobia, and London's winning Olympic Bid all impacting on the way TJ leaders in London have had to interact and adapt.

6. The Tablighi Jamaat in London: An Insider Perspective

6.1.1 Introduction

The publicly stated primary goal of Tablighi Jamaat in London, outside of continued efforts to reorient Muslims back to a 'truer' version of Islam, is the desire to construct the Markaz Ilyas – commonly described as the "mega-mosque"(Perlez 2007a; Lyle 2008; Hamilton and Gledhill 2010; Craig 2011a; DeHanas and Pieri 2011). This chapter has two primary aims. The first presents TJ as a movement in London from the perspective of its leaders, adherents and discourses. The second discusses the goal of wanting to construct the proposed mosque through the lens of ideology and claims-making of movement leaders, as presented to (and as discussed by) grassroots Tablighis during Thursday evening *bayans* at the Markaz Ilyas. This will highlight how TJ leaders in London have framed claims around the mosque, how these have been interpreted by grassroots adherents, and the extent to which these signal how the process of transformation has been negotiated.

The chapter will demonstrate that there is a distinction between elite instrumentally aware leaders and rank and file grassroots members of the TJ in London. TJ leaders, as with leaders in other organisations, have to consider the larger context in which their movements operate, and as such strategise accordingly. Leaders may frame a message in different ways to its signed-up members at relatively private meetings from the way that same message is presented in public. Grassroots members may not concern themselves with wider strategies, instead focusing on what they regard as authentic interpretations of a given movement's doctrine. This sometimes gives the impression that there is disconnect between what movement leaders say in public and what adherents are instructed in private. This reflects the ability of movement leaders to adapt to contextual

changes, ensuring the success of the movement. This will become increasingly important as the thesis examines the extent to which the London TJ has committed itself to engagement with the local community in order to promote its construction project. The TJ in London is a movement whose main concern is, and always has been the eternal – working towards the re-orientation of one's life to the exact imitation of Mohammad and the early generation of Muslims, or what Reetz has termed 'living like the pious ancestors' as a means of salvation (Reetz 2003; Gugler 2007).

TJ leaders have taught their adherents to abstain from worldliness, to focus on piety, self-reformation, invitation of others to Islam and ultimately the salvation of the soul:

> Concern yourselves only with the heavens above and the grave below, and never about the world in between[70]

In the context of modern Britain, however, with concerns over Islamic terrorism and the pressures surrounding proposals for mosque construction, TJ leaders have had to become attune to the 'here', that is to become involved in the processes of engaging with the secular, which until 2005 they had largely avoided. TJ leaders in London are caught between "here and eternity", seeking the sacred, but having to adapt to the practicalities of new contexts in which they must also negotiate the here.

6.1.2 From Here to Eternity: Conceptualising the TJ's Project in London

Having already gained an historical perspective of the movement in previous chapters, this chapter seeks to understand and present TJ as it is now in London – its aims, ambitions, worldview and role in society. This will be achieved through examining key

[70] A common mantra that TJ interviewees repeated to me

concepts emerging from the movement's Thursday evening *bayans* in West Ham, interviews with its members, and analysing its primary literature. The chapter examines a number of themes central to the Thursday evening *bayans*, including worldliness, *jahiliyya*, *donya*, consumerism, nationalism and a striving for the hereafter. The argument is that grassroots members of the London TJ view the society in which they function as well as their role in it, through an understanding that the ultimate goal of the Tablighi is to strive for the eternal. Through understanding the motivating ideologies of the movement as presented to grassroots members in London, it is hoped that a basis can be established to analyse how these same ideologies have been reinterpreted by leaders in order to justify an adaptation of strategies.

For TJ adherents, interaction with the profane should be limited to necessary tasks such as propagating Islam, or working in order to support one's family. Tablighis have become masters in using modern cultural references in order to argue against these same cultural trends, which they view as un-Islamic, and as having a corrupting influence on the wider society. In this sense, there is something to be said about the "worldly unworldliness" of TJ – a movement that preaches through culture against culture. A movement that so loves the world that they tirelessly work to convey what they see as the redeeming message of Islam, yet at the same time fundamentally believe that a failure to convert is a ticket to deserved damnation.

The concept of *dawah* will be examined as part of this, as after all, *dawah* is the main activity of the movement. Committed members donate up to four months a year on proselytisation tours. *Dawah* is seen as an investment in the bank of Allah, an activity ensuring salvation. At the same time propagating the message of Islam is seen as pleasing

to Allah, and thus having the ability to enable success in this life. In the context of TJ leaders' desire to construct the proposed mosque, a renewed effort in *dawah* has been interpreted to mean a more successful outcome for the project. The chapter concludes with an extensive analysis of London TJ leaders' response to the LNB's Notice of Enforcement. The chapter provides a case-study through which teachings imparted to TJ adherents at the Thursday *bayans* can be isolated, allowing for a comparison to be made with how TJ leaders have framed those same messages in public – specifically during the 'Public Inquiry over Enforcement Action of the Abbey Mills Riverine Centre' and through the movement's public consultation events.

That the construction of the new mosque is both a public and private goal of the movement is not contested. What will be noted, however, is that this goal cannot be viewed as distinctly separate from the movement's striving for and seeking of the eternal. This means that even though "innovative" methods such as media engagement and use of modern technologies may be needed in order to attain the mosque, the purpose of the construction will be to act as a beacon of correct Islamic practice in the local area. It is argued that what is taught to adherents at the movement's meetings, and what TJ leaders stipulate in public, are for the most part the same; what differs is the way in which these goals have been framed and presented to differing audiences. The new mosque whilst acting as a base from which to coordinate and promote the sacred through the efforts of *dawah*, also represents the here and the profane, for in an objective way, the accomplishment of the project will be as a result of successful negotiation of issues arising from a modern, secular and deeply political arena. Tablighi leaders have been forced to adapt their methods and to engage; this is the means through which the project will succeed.

For TJ adherents in London the ultimate success of the project does not rest in the powers of this world, but rather depends on the will of Allah and upon the amount of energy and effort placed into promoting a "correct" version of Islam. This is the message expressed during the Thursday *bayans*, and is the view of the majority of dedicated grassroots adherents. The TJ leadership, however, has also awoken to the realisation that in order to succeed with mosque construction in Britain, disengaging and leaving matters to the will of Allah is not an appropriate response (from the perspective of secular authorities), with at least some attempt at public relations and civic engagement necessary (Mohammed 2011). It is not concerns over multiculturalism or social cohesion that have motivated TJ leaders in adapting their strategies (although these are important contextual factors), but rather the fact that a failure to abide by the norms of the planning process will result in failure for the project.

By way of reminder, it is well known that there is a need for claims-making to 'ring-true' or resonate with individuals' observations or experiences' (Walder 2009: 406; Githens-Mazer 2008). Experiences are closely allied to cultural values, beliefs and the social milieu with the success of a movement depending on the extent to which claims being made intersect with these cultural values and practices (Snow and Benford 1992). This has been the primary difficulty for TJ in London – for with the ambition of constructing the Markaz Ilyas, movement leaders have had to adapt claims-making to two sets of audiences – those already in, or sympathetic to the movement and those who are scrutinising the project from a secular/policy perspective. That TJ leaders in London may have framed the same messages in different ways, tailored to each of its audiences highlights their adeptness at recognising the contexts in which they function, attempting

to engage with both in order to achieve their goals. Frames need to resonate with a number of different actors including adherents, constituents and bystanders if movements are to be successful in their goals (Snow and Benford 1992; Mooney and Hunt 1996: 178; Berbrier 1998: 433; Kubal 1998: 542). The problem for TJ and other such movements is that it is a necessary precondition that frames are both credible and salient, if they are not they are more than likely to fail.

6.2 Dressing, Eating, Sleeping: Living Like the Pious Ancestors

TJ as a movement do not view the modern world, the here and now, as a place where meaningful interaction, other than for the propagation of Islam should take place unless it is a necessity. For TJ adherents the world as it is now is in a state of what is know as *jahiliyyah*, that is a state of darkness, ignorance and abandonment of God. As Metcalf puts it, for Tablighis as for other Islamic revivalists, the belief is that 'this is again a time of *jahiliyyah*, a time of ignorance classically understood as the pre-Mohammadan age in Arabia' (Metcalf 2009: 242).[71] From this perspective the world has abandoned its dependence on Allah and has drifted into a state of sin and frivolous immorality, and that this has happened because Muslims as the vice-regents of Allah have become lazy, abandoning their religious and social duties (Ali 2006: 182). Tablighis' lives are governed by a strict imitation of the way in which Mohammad and the early generation of Muslims lived their lives, and any deviation from this path in the Muslim community contributes to the degeneration and decay of the *ummah*. That this is the current state of the world was recognised by Ilyas at the inception of the movement, with the purpose of TJ being to counter to this:

[71] This is a concept that Islamists such as Qutb and Maududi also developed (Qutb 2006)

> In the beginning of Islam (when *deen* was weak and *donya* was strong), the Holy Prophet himself went from house to house to meet the people empty of the want of *deen*...The same weakness is present today. Therefore, we should visit in person the groups of impious and those who feel no interest in religion and are empty of the want of *deen*, and exalt the word of Allah among them (Ilyas in, No'mani 2001: 67).

Other than for the purpose of propagating the message of Islam as a means of countering the state of ignorance prevalent in all societies across the world, Ilyas saw little reason for engagement or involvement in the structures of those societies. Being an active and involved citizen was anathema to Ilyas, who believed there was little point in engaging in the systems of a corrupt society when what was really important was to focus on the individual as the agent of change, that what was of first importance was to overcome the state of ignorance prevalent in society. An antidote to this is of course following the correct proscription of rules of conduct in society as outlined by TJ. This involves rules around how members of the movement are to reorient their lives including ways of dressing, eating and sleeping.[72] The severity of following these rules was highlighted consistently at the Thursday evening gatherings, with the talk on 21 January 2010, being a good example. The speaker informed those gathered, "in our society, the Muslims have become very degenerate to the point where someone cannot tell if a Muslim is actually a Muslim".[73] The speaker sought to demonstrate this point with the following story:

> There was once a man and he was involved in an accident and died, and some of the brothers [meaning members of the Muslim community] did not know if he was a Muslim – he did not have a beard, he did not wear Islamic dress - the only way to tell was to unzip him and see if he was circumcised. This is what is has come to![74]

The point of this story is that it highlights that the emphasis put on external markers of identity by Deobandis and Tablighis in the early Twentieth Century (see Chapter 4) have remained key to this day. The story further resonates with Tablighis who believe that

[72] This sort of totality in religious rules governing one's life is a common feature of theocratic groups – for further discussion see Swaine (Swaine 2006)
[73] Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and Talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[74] Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and Talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

many Muslims in Britain have integrated so well into British society that it is now difficult to distinguish between Muslims and non-Mulsims. The story reinforces for Tablighis the importance of Muslims maintaining marked characteristics of the faith - purity and segregation from what is going on in the wider world – a detachment so that one can focus one's complete being on forming a bond with the creator. Clothing becomes an external indicator of an individual's religious zeal. It also acts as amour to protect that individual, serving as a reminder that they are Muslim and as such should behave as a Muslim at all times. The speaker continued:

> Muslims have to make an effort to be outwardly Muslim because that also reflects on the inwardness of the Muslim. To dress and act in the way of the Prophet and his companions is to be in the right direction of fulfilling Islam.[75]

Through acting 'in the way of the Prophet', the belief is that one's life should be completely oriented on the very same model of Mohammad. The rational as one adherent put it, "if it was good enough for the Prophet, and he was the best of mankind, then who are we not to follow that?"[76] Even so, it was perplexing to hear such an importance being placed on "outwardly" appearance, and that this would in turn symbolise the inward reality of the individual. Indeed, by most standards of modern society, we are taught that it is what is on the inside that counts and not the exterior. In an interview with one of the participants it was explained:

> Dress is very important to us. You heard the speaker say that things have got so bad that today you walk around and you don't know who is a Muslim and who isn't. Even though we may not be perfect Muslims if we start to dress like a Muslim we will start to act like a Muslim. If we are dressed like a Muslim it is like wearing your identity and you will start to be more regular in being a Muslim...every one will know you are Muslim and because you are dressed like that you are representing the Muslims and so you must do good actions.[77]

[75] Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and Talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[76] Conversation with TJ adherent following the talk, Thursday 21 January 2010, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[77] Interview with Abdullah, Thursday 21 January 2010, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

The participant commented that whilst he understood that some media commentators have "made a big thing about Islamic dress", the reality is that if one is to base their existence on the imitation of the Prophet as the basis for correct living and sound structuring of society, then dress is an important aspect of that. Islamic dress, then, is one way in which Tablighis believe they can help counter the state of degeneracy around them. It is one way of maintaining the given order and rules as interpreted by TJ. The theme was returned to at a talk in September where a different speaker admonished those gathered:

> Muslims now do not follow Islam properly and this is the cause of our troubles. Nine to five they go to work, they don't say their prayers, don't wear *salwaar kameez*, don't grow their beard, don't eat *halal* meat and then as soon as they go home they become "Muslim" again. This is not the true mark of a Muslim who should strive everyday to be fully Muslim[78]

One cannot understand TJ with out realising the extreme importance that the movement places on the correct Islamic practise of every single activity in a Muslim's life. Being a Tablighi is not just about following a certain strand of Islam, it entails a complete way of life with rules governing every single action as well as a belief that a failure to adhere to these rules is at the core of the *ummah's* decay. Indeed, one chapter of the *Fazail-E-Amal*, delves into minute detail as to the way Muslims are to conduct themselves – some examples are below (Elahi 2007):

- Wash your hands before and after meals, and wash your mouth also.
- Do not eat from the centre of the utensil, for the blessing of Allah descends at that point.
- Lick your fingers before washing your hands, it is mentioned in a *hadith*, "one does not know in which particle of the food the blessing is found in.

[78] Thursday 2 September 2010, gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

- Take you meal with three fingers and of the right hand.
- Clean the bed thrice before going to sleep.
- Lie on the bed on your right side, place your right hand under your cheek and say "O Allah in your name do I die and live".

The above actions were observable whilst spending time with many Tablighis. Whilst having dinner one evening, one of the adherents explained that he liked to finish his whole plate and lick his fingers clean because this would earn him ten blessings: "Allah is so good because not only does he provide food for us, but rewards us for being respectful and finishing what is on the plate".[79] Many of the participants assured me that following the proscribed rules for each action ensured the correct way of life as dictated by the *Shari'a* and that if every Muslim did the same then the state of the *Ummah* would be in a much better situation; as well as this, following the rules also help to advance the salvation of the individual. It is also worth noting that this way of living provides a firm structure on which adherents must base their lives. In an ever changing and fast paced society, many in TJ see this as providing stability, reassurance and a purpose to their existence. It also leaves little room for engaging or interacting with wider non-Tablighi society.

6.3 Donya

Whilst TJ as a movement wants to see a change in the way society is organised, the method of doing this is through reformation of the individual, and therefore a long-term objective. It is the individual who should be seen as the agent of change through

[79] Dinner with Hamid, 22 October 2010, local Muslim cafe, Newham

following the correct mode of living as proscribed by the *Shari'a* and as interpreted by TJ. Any indulgence in the modern world, or what TJ term as *donya* results in intoxication:

> Because we are intoxicated through our desires, we can't think straight. Jamaats come and go, every Thursday we come and go but we still don't understand. Time and time again we are explained this. Our minds, our heads, our skulls – we are not taking this and we cannot digest this.[80]

Later in the speech, the speaker returned to the same theme:

> The intoxication of alcohol lasts a few hours; half a day. When somebody is intoxicated with it, when he wants to become rich, when he wants to become known, when he wants to become a leader; that intoxication lasts for a long time...we have to turn and direct our conviction away from these created things.[81]

This is as a result of an attachment to *donya,* an attachment to the current state of society. For TJ adherents, *donya* is conceptualised as all those things which can be consumed, both physical and otherwise, the material and the worldly – the here. The good Muslim should move away from *donya* and instead turn to the mosque, seeking to improve and reorient their life to the attainment of salvation. So bad has the situation in our current societies become, so much has the love of *donya* increased, according to one TJ speaker, "this world is not even equal to one wing of a mosquito - this world is an example of something that is foul smelling, a very poor smell".[82] For rank and file members of TJ, this perception of society's worth leaves little desire for engagement, and can explain TJ's traditional stance of apartism.

Modern conveniences are seen as having the ability to hold people back, to attach people to the profane causing an eschewing of responsibilities to Allah. For the most part Thursday evening talks conveyed consumerism as the epitome of *donya* and as

[80] Thursday 24 June 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[81] Thursday 24 June 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[82] Thursday 24 June 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

something every Tablighi is to resist. It is TJ's belief that it is necessary to take consumerism and what they call "creation" "out of our heart for creation stops us from reaching our potential. We are stunned by the way of the world and our heart deviates from the word of Allah".[83] This signifies that material things have the power to take a person away from the path of Allah. Indeed this was the key point made at the gathering on 22 October 2009. The speaker called out:

> This world is too consumer oriented...too much faith is put in technology, in science and in non-religious education and too much effort in keeping up with the Jones.[84]

The speaker argued that what was needed to make a success of life and of society as a whole, was disengagement from all these frivolous activities and "time to focus on the unseen, on Allah and his angels".[85] These words had a deep impact on those gathered; most were nodding their heads in agreement. It seemed that many present that evening were seeking out a spiritual dimension for their lives, and that the suggestion of unplugging from a fast-paced society with a heavy dependence on media and technology was ideal. The interesting point is that even though this is the message preached to grassroots adherents at official Tablighi meetings, it is not the approached followed by the leaders of the movement in London as will be seen in the next chapter. It is this "worldly unworldliness" of TJ – its ability to preach against culture through culture that allows the movement to resonate with the everyday lives of its followers. One of the regular activists of the movement was aware of this fact when he said in an interview:

> Tablighi Jamaat lifts peoples' eyes to heaven and it allows them to fulfil a spiritual dimension that is seriously lacking in consumerist western societies and other movements that focus on politics and worldly issues.[86]

[83] Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[84] Thursday 22 October, 2009, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, Wet Ham London
[85] Thursday 22 October, 2009, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, West Ham London
[86] Interview with Hamid, 22 October, 2009, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham London

TJ recognises that there is a deep spiritual yearning amongst many Muslims (not to mention the wider population) as well as a belief that for all the conveniences of modern technology, it has not done anything to improve the moral character of individuals. Participants reported that looking at society they see a rise in crime, in drugs and alcohol abuse, and in TV shows that profit from the exploitation of peoples' personal unfortunate circumstances. TJ's message of abandoning worldly attachments, turning inwards to re-examine ones own life, and striving for salvation has been resonant amongst its members.[87]

There is no better example of TJ's "worldly unworldliness", of its ability to highlight modern cultural practices in order to preach against those very same practices than in the following *bayan*:

> Material wealth, play stations, cars and modern conveniences do not give you happiness; they do not give you the final status. What does matter is working in the path of Allah, because only Allah can give you what you want. Materialism breeds materialism and this is the cause of feeling depressed, of feeling anguished. Pills cannot cure this, medicines cannot cure this, only Allah can cure this.[88]

Gilles Kepel noted similar sentiments at TJ gatherings in France showing that this is part and parcel of TJ as a whole, and not unique to the movement in London:

> Now there are people who go to the moon! And after that? There are more suicides in America than anywhere in the whole world. Every year more than 80,000 persons commit suicide there! That is the country that you find great and want to imitate!...Why are there more than 80,000 people who hang themselves? This is because they have not found comfort in this world. Because they are farther from God. That is why they commit suicide. (Kepel 2000: 195-6)

In these instances, the speakers attempt to invert values that are important to modern western societies – to show that modernity is not the antidote to the problems of the world, but rather part of the problem. At the same time it is apparent that TJ is caught in

[87] That this type of message is also resonant amongst a wider population, one need only turn to Ekhart Tolle's book *A New Earth* which has sold over 6 million copies worldwide (Tolle 2005).
[88] Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

this juxtaposition between the worldly and the unworldly – recognising that as the most important of Allah's creation, the world has been made for mankind, but at the same time mankind belongs to Allah, and therefore, to the sacred. This was well put by one of the speakers – "This world is made for you; but you have been made for Allah".[89] It is the same juxtaposition that TJ leaders have been caught in when discussing their approach to engaging with British institutions as a means to furthering the construction of their proposed mosque.

Whilst for the majority of the population material wealth, physical possessions and modern conveniences denote success in this life, for TJ members this signals a trap, it resembles an attachment to the profane and a hindrance in being able to meaningfully engage with the spiritual. For TJ members the way to achieve success in this world is through abandoning attempts at pursuing the material, instead focusing that energy on bringing others towards the Tablighi version of Islam. The same speaker emphasised this point arguing that:

> The current system we live in is a perversion of the true order of society that is the society, which Allah and his Prophet had envisioned for us. Everything which we are told is good for us is actually not. Working for success, for power, for money, for position is nothing. Only Allah can grant those things.[90]

Again, on Thursday 25 February 2010, the following advice was given to the gathered adherents:

> Riches are not success, armies are not success, palaces are not success. All these have to be left behind...The Prophets did not come to make riches, to promote people in their businesses, but to ask people to turn away from these and re-connect with Allah.[91]

[89] Thursday 12 August 2101, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[90] Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[91] Thursday 25 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

These attitudes are reflected in the writings of the movement, not least in the words of the founder. Ilyas warned his early followers that consumerism is the major disease of this age – that real disease is 'concentration and absorption in worldly engagements – the things which have not left even a single moment spare in their lives for getting *deen*' (Ilays in, No'mani 2001: 255). Ilyas would go on to warn that 'these engagements and attachments are the "lords besides Allah" and 'new idols of this age' (Ilays in, No'mani 2001: 255). As part of the desire to construct the Markaz Ilyas, however, TJ leaders themselves have been increasingly reliant on investing their time, effort and funds in professionally hired teams, including PR and Media consultants (Jones 2011). This demonstrates that although the movement's messages may seem rigid, leaders have room to manoeuvre and to reinterpret established ideologies, especially if doing so promotes the expansion of the movement or allows it to succeed in its objectives.

Whilst the ideal for TJ adherents may be to disengage from the wider society and for all of one's energy to be focused on reorienting towards "Allah and his angels", the leadership in London recognise the need to follow a practical agenda. In order for any major construction project to advance, one has to play by the rules of the existing system, and that may mean temporarily having to follow a strategy that is considered as a "necessary evil". This is an important observation for it signals that contrary to the cannon of Tablighi beliefs, movement leaders are more flexible and adaptable than may first seem. TJ leaders in London have reinterpreted their current situation as being similar to that of the Meccan period of Mohammad's life. This is the period when the Muslim community was still small and vulnerable and as a consequence had to establish good relationships with their neighbours in an atmosphere of coexistence (Peters 1991). There was flexibility in the way Muslims were to conduct themselves with the wider non-

Muslim society. TJ leaders in London view a similar level of flexibility as necessary today. This partly explains the how the process of adaptation is negotiated within the movement. This flexibility with the political is further seen a 'necessary step in the path of ultimately establishing an Islamic state in the distant future' (Sikand 2007: 146).

6.4 Negotiating the Here and Now

There is a frustration on the part of TJ adherents, due to society having become embedded in such a secular and profane mode of existence that their way of operating is viewed as alien. TJ, at first impression have remained constant, the movement still values the same high moral standards and ethics which most religious groups and individuals have held as key to their lives throughout history. Frustration over the state of society is expressed by a TJ affiliated author:

> Today all values have been lost. To practice *deen* is regarded as inertness. To make an exit from *deen* is called progress, good is regarded as evil and evil is regarded as virtuous. The majority are so ignorant of *deen* that the situation goes beyond belief' (Al-Mashaat 1993: 22).

For those who become increasingly committed to the work of TJ, the image of non-Tablighi society becomes one of *jahiliyya.* It becomes harder to fully partake in the activities of the wider community, because those activities are seen as sinful and as counter to the commandments of Allah. For Tablighi adherents, the ability to recognise this is a form of empowerment as it allows them to guard themselves against similar errors. In one of the movement's key texts, Zakarriya warns his readers that just because people in the west may engage in sinful activities and still remain successful in their economic dealings, it does not mean that they will have success in the hereafter. Zakarriya writes that:

> So much have some ignorant Muslims been troubled and perplexed that they even went to the extent to rejecting the tenants of the shariat...they went so far as to look at the non-believers, and decided that those evils which are present in the make-up of the non-believers were the very causes of their success (Kandhlawi 2001: 94).

For Tablighi adherents a disengagement from what are perceived to be the sinful activities of the wider society – drinking alcohol, smoking, listening to popular rhythmic music, intermingling of the sexes etc. is a way of bettering their chances of salvation. For those who engage in such activities, activities that are seen as a normal part of British life, the Tablighi's stance seems isolationist and disengaging. This is a theme that Ali, one of the interviewees commented on:

> Here, you hear about so many people who in society focus on money. If I make so much this year I have to make more next year, if I live in this house this year, I will want a better one next and the same goes for cars. But when I die, can I take these with me? No. No one can. We need to realise this. But if I travel on *jamaat* and bring Islam to others even when I am dead they will remember me and give me blessings.[92]

The emphasis for Tablighis is on the immaterial. Tablighis realise that material wealth is of no use once an individual dies, whereas following an Islamic way of life as interpreted by TJ may guarantee them eternity in paradise. There is often disconnect between such beliefs (which are also held by many religious people of different faiths) and the increasingly materialist views of many in western societies. This can leave those who do not pursue a consumerist lifestyle portrayed as an "other".

Tablighi leaders recognise that their teachings go against the grain of popular practices in western societies. They bemoan the fact that society has lost its direction, that the balance of the universe has been disrupted and that in actuality we have inverted good and evil becoming blind to the realities laid down by Allah:

[92] Interview with Ali, 11 February, 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

> Today brothers we see benefit in harm and harm in what is benefit. There was once a man in a dark room who could not see to get out. In his attempt to get out of the room, he felt out and left a coarse, rough, long object. The man said to himself that the object could damage his hands. He then felt out again and felt a long smooth object. He liked this so he grabbed hold of it and it was a snake that killed him. He in the darkness thought that he was doing of what was of benefit to himself. Like him, even though we are not in a dark room, because we do not have the guidance of Allah are like being in a dark room. We cannot make decisions that benefit us we chose harm thinking it is good.[93]

The indication here is that the leaders of the movement have the benefit of being able to differentiate between good and bad, as can members of TJ through strict adherence to Tablighi doctrine. One of the speakers pronounced that, "we do not know where we are going, we do not have direction. Today the majority of people place value in mobile telephones, in houses, cars, money; these are the things that appeal to us".[94] Another speaker announced that the majority of people have become slaves to our desires forgetting or even rejecting Allah: "No one is a slave of Allah. We are the slave of the environment that is governing our condition".[95] This resonates with Tablighi members who see consumerist practices on a daily basis amongst their neighbours or extended families, and are agitated into participating in TJ's efforts to counter this.

Tariq Jameel, a popular TJ speaker, has said of the state of society:

> I bear Allah as my witness that even an animal as dirty as the pig feels embarrassed at the state of our society today. The world's most shameless animal, today is embarrassed to see society like this. People have gone beyond the borderline of abomination. The veil covering people's dignity has been lifted by them.[96]

It is this belief in the material, according to TJ leaders and adherents, that is the cause of society having lost its direction. The things that are of real importance according to one Tablighi speaker are "*dawah*, *zakat*, justice, helping the poor and seeking knowledge of *deen*". These are what TJ strive towards, and what they want others in the community to

[93] Thursday 11 March 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[94] Thursday 11 March 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[95] Thursday 24 June 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[96] From a recording of Tariq Jamil recommended to the interviewer by a participant

also realise. "When we are able to see properly" according to the speaker, "we will see that virtues are more valuable than material possessions".[97] The importance of this is that with the Islamic element of TJ aside, such views of charity, justice and neighbourliness are in fact at the heart of the community cohesion debate. The issue for TJ, however, is that there cannot be a separation of Islam from any of their actions and as such their message often fails to resonate with the broader society.

In an interview with a senior member of the London movement, a modern example was used to highlight the juxtaposition between the worldly and unworldly, engagement and non-engagement of society, and the complex position TJ is in regarding these matters. The interviewee made it clear that TJ has firm rules as to what is and is not acceptable in society, but that these values are being brought into question by a society that does not have any concept of the importance of an Islamic vision of morality. Focusing on the movement's proposed construction of the new mosque, the interviewee was particularly concerned about the way in which London's successful bid for the 2012 Olympic Games had changed the context of how Islamic movements are viewed, and in particular TJ with its proposed new mosque near the Olympics Stadium. The interviewee stated that TJ, as part of an effort to show their commitment to values of openness, tolerance and community spiritedness were expected to actively show support for the Games:

> At best, the TJ have become neutral to the Olympic Games and this is a major step! How can the TJ or any other serious Islamic movement actively condone the Olympic Games? Scantily clad women running around and in full view of the mixing of sexes – this is very un-Islamic! The bursting open of champagne bottles for those who win on the podium; this is un-Islamic! Why should the TJ be expected to support or condone this?[98]

[97] Thursday 11 March 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[98] Interview with senior member of the TJ, Tuesday 10 August, Newham, London

The point is that as part of the effort to construct their new mosque, TJ are expected to show their commitment and support of what the movement may have traditionally considered sinful. TJ in London originally wanted the new mosque constructed in time for the Games, with the intention that the mosque would act as the "Muslim quarter", 'a hub for Islamic competitors and spectators' (Johnston 2006). For TJ in London, the role of providing a morally pure atmosphere for Muslim competitors and a chance to inform them of the Tablighi version of Islam would have mitigated some of their concerns surrounding such events. The response to this suggestion (from those outside of the TJ), however, once made public was negative, with most commentators noting that the Olympics are meant to bring people together, not keep them apart (Johnston 2006; Al-Alawi and Schwartz 2007). The situation became even more tense in light of the context following the 7/7 bombings, as there is now little room for goodwill or a deeper understanding of the motivations of the movement, only that it be seen to conform to the same standards of society as prescribed by the government and media.

In a different example, particularly susceptible to the adverse affects of Western society according to TJ, are the youth who are easily led astray by the devil - *shaytan.* TJ aim to create a safe social environment, almost an alternative social order where its adherents have the best possible chance of working towards salvation. In some cases, and where possible, this extends to the education of children, with the advice being that Muslim children should not be subjected to a western education. In one book on sale at the Markaz Ilyas bookshop, the advice is:

> You should be convinced as to how disastrous it is to send young children to these non-Muslim institutions and how harmful it is to their *deen* and character. Our children tend to become isolated from *deen*, emblazoned by the emblem of disbelievers and become flagrant violators with regard to beliefs, actions and characters (Al-Mashaat 1993: 9).

The warning here is that a western education is not beneficial to Muslim children due to the secular curriculum of western schools. There are many faith schools in Britain belonging to a number of different denominations including Anglican, Roman Catholic, Jewish and Muslim. The issue with the view expressed in the book on education promoted by TJ, however, is its espousal of a negative view of society and education in the west. It warns parents that they have a responsibility to protect their children from the traps laid out in western schools to draw children away from Islam, and even argues that forming friendships with non-Muslims is enough to entrap one in the fires of hell for eternity (Al-Mashaat 1993). This is problematic because it highlights inconsistencies with the message propagated by London TJ leaders in public of the movement being open and inclusive, and that all will be welcome to the new mosque.

For TJ, however, disengagement from society and a focusing on the work of Allah does not necessarily denote a detachment from that society. The second speaker at the gathering on 21 January 2010, maintained that devoting one's life to going out on *jamaat* transforms the lives of those who take part making them better citizens. The speaker noted that men who had gone on *jamaat* returned changed men – "more caring husbands, loving fathers, better Muslims".[99] The boldest statement was that TJ has a better vision for society, a vision that would "enhance the community in the UK". The claim was that many people who go out on *jamaat:*

> They were in to drinking, drugs, some of them addicted, women, sex outside of marriage. But with the grace of Allah, and through the effort of Tabligh they have left their gangs, given up the alcohol and drugs and *harram*. Now they are hard working and pious people".[100]

[99] 2nd speaker, Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[100] 2nd speaker, Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

Should this scheme be implemented throughout Britain, it could serve to transform communities across the country. Whilst this signals a positive ideal of wanting to help the community, it also entails that the community as a whole convert to Islam, re-orienting their own lives and efforts towards the work of TJ. This is not something that is realistically achievable in the UK. More recently TJ leaders' claims that they aim to imbue self-respect and self-control in members, the ability to abstain from the wrongs of society and not to be drawn into the sub-cultures of their local areas. Just as in London, TJ in Australia according to Jan Ali, follow the same method:

> In Australia I have seen, for example, a lot of drug addicts and gangsters becoming involved in the religion because of the Tablighi Jamaat. They left the bad things and they don't do bad things...they pray. The Tablighi Jamaat has provided the environment for the people to have more self-respect, something that's not found in wider Australia. There are a lot of misbehaving teenagers and dysfunctional and dismantled families...Tablighi Jamaat has a lot of good affect on them (TJ adherent in, Ali 2006: 208).

TJ are attune to the problems of the world and not as disengaged as first may appear. In an Islamic context, it seems as though TJ can be a force for good in society providing a strictly Islamic antidote to the problem. The issue is that Britain as with the majority of states in the West are far from being Islamic contexts, with TJ's message having little resonance with the wider society.

6.5 Salvation and the Hereafter

For TJ there is more to life than life. There is death and the hereafter, and it is here that we will spend eternity. One cannot underestimate TJ adherents' powerful belief in the Day of Judgment, in the yearning for salvation and an eternity in paradise far away from the scorching fires of hell. For TJ adherents, life in this world is a limited one – one that should constantly be striving for the hereafter. This is a theme that has been advanced by

a number of the Thursday evening speakers. The speaker on Thursday 11 March 2010 stated that: "If we die with the kingdom of this world in our hearts" meaning with importance and riches, "and not with the guidance of Allah then we have failed". This clearly inverts the current meaning of success, before the speaker proceeded to make this even clearer:

> We may think that someone who is poor and in rags has failed, but if they have the guidance of Allah then they are much better of than us. For those who fail there is eternal doom, woes and misery.[101]

This reminds the congregation that a temporary taste of what is believed to be success in this life at the expense of obeying the commands of Allah, can result an eternity of misery. On a different Thursday evening, after the official talk had come to a conclusion, a senior member of the London movement made an impromptu speech. This speech was delivered to adherents in the English speaking section of the Mosque, and was not a translation of another speech being said in any other part of the mosque. The speaker spoke in an impassioned way instructing the adherents:

> Before the Muslim could commit to living a genuine life here, he first had to commit to dying for the sake of Allah, for only once we have committed to dying – that is to accept that we will die, that we must die – will be able to live as true Muslims. Only then will we know when to laugh, when to cry, when to eat.[102]

In a similar fashion, a different speaker commented that:

> Just as Ibrahim [the prophet Abraham] was told to sacrifice his son, we must also sacrifice ourselves and go out in the path of Allah, and make battle with ourselves, our inner desires, battle with that, sacrifice that. This will give a person a high place in paradise...he will achieve the pleasure of Allah![103]

[101] Thursday 11 March 2010, Gathering and talk at the Masjid Ilyas, Abbey Mills Riverine Centre, West Ham, London
[102] 2nd speaker, Thursday 21 January 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[103] Thursday 24 June 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

This is a difficult commitment to make – the ideal is to live one's life as though nothing exists other than Allah, for it is only once a Muslim has come to terms with the principle that his life is not his own, but rather Allah's will he be able to live in an appropriate way in this world. More than this, TJ view this as a matter of *jihad* – an internal struggle for the purification of the mind, body and soul. Of course this way of living is not one that is much recognised in the west, although is similar to the philosophy that Christian aesthetics and monks subscribe to. Archimandrite Vaselios of the Orthodox Church wrote that for a monk one of the most important mantras is that of "He who loses his life in this world, will save it" (Vaselios 1984: 118). As with Tablighis, this should not be misconstrued to mean carrying out suicide attacks, but rather the realisation that one has to completely detach themselves from the systems of this world, placing complete and utter trust in the systems of God. The difference is that the monastics know that it is virtually impossible to do this and still claim to function as engaged members of a society in the ordinary sense – instead they reside in monastic communities dedicating their lives to prayer and supplications for the salvation of the world (Rogers 2002).

The themes of salvation and the hereafter were common to many of the Thursday *bayans.* At a different talk, it was expressed that this world is but a mere illusion, a testing ground, a place where one must pass through in order to reach the place where one's soul will reside forever:

> The real life is the life hereafter. The time in this world is like a needle dipped into the sea; just a small drop on the tip of the needle. The whole ocean is like the life hereafter. Very temporary, very temporary this life. Allah wants to bestow on us the success and favour of never ending life after death.[104]

[104] Thursday 26 August 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

For Tablighis the life hereafter is a very real and looming factor. One never knows the time of death, and as such one has to be prepared at all times. As one interviewee put it to me, "Allah is just, he will judge according to our *iman* and *amal* and if we have not followed his path then there is eternity in the fires of *jahanam*".[105] At a different gathering the same interviewee presented me with a recording of a Tablighi *bayan* given by a Tablighi elder who had travelled to Chicago. One of the main themes of the *bayan* was the hereafter – a life of salvation or the threat of eternal damnation in the unbearable pits of hell. Having listened to this talk, it is not difficult to see why members of TJ want to ensure that they follow the directives of the movement:

> Either a person will go into paradise or a person will go into the fire of hell *jahanam.* One of these places a person will go – if a person is entered into paradise he will have luxuries and comfort for ever and ever, and if a person is entered into the fire of hell, the fire of *jahanam* then he'll suffer for ever and ever and ever, the suffering will never end. For example, a person, he'll feel thirsty for 1000s of years. For his thirst he will not even get a sip of water. If a person will feel hungry, this hunger will stay with him for 100s and 1000s of years but this hunger will not be fulfilled and he will not be given even a morsel of food. In the same manner for millions and billions and trillions of years this person will continuously be facing hardships and inconvenience and he'll be put into trouble and he'll be put into sufferings for not even a fraction of a minute will there be any comfort or any ease on him. This is forever and ever in the fire of hell. And my dear respected brothers, this person will be put into the fire of *jahanam*, he will see the end of *jahanam* like a person who is travelling in the sea and when he sees the shore, he will want to go to the shore – in exactly the same manner this person will want to go to the edge of the fire of *jahanam*. And he will request of Allah, "Grant me permission so that I can go to the edge of the fire of *jahanam*". And this person will go to the edge of the fire and this person will go there to the border, there'll be snakes. The snakes will be so huge like a palm tree. In the same manner over there, there'll be scorpions, scorpions the size of a mule and a donkey. In the same manner other insects which will be huge and massive size – all of them will get on to this person and they will start biting him and this person will out of suffering say, "Oh Allah I cannot take this I do not want to stay at the border of the fire of *jahnam,* I would rather go back to the centre of the fire of *Jahnnam*". And my dear brothers, the fire of *jahanam* is so massive that Allah has made, that all the people from the time of Adam until the day of judgment, if they were put into this *jahanam*, *jahanam* could accommodate all of them. Jahanam has so much space for all of the human beings.[106]

For the Tablighis this is not a medieval description of what hell might be like, it is the professed belief of the movement. These images of *jahanam*, or hell, have such a deep impact on the psyche of TJ members, so strong is the belief that this could actually happen that it is no wonder members constantly strive for salvation. This is further one of

[105] Interview with Tablighi adherent, 19 August 2010, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[106] Taken form the recording of a speech made by Ahmed Suleman Alkhatani – Chicago Ijtima 2009

the key motivating factors in pursuing the construction of the mosque and of following innovative methods to achieve it. Through building the new mosque, it will act as a beacon of correct Islamic practise, calling individuals to Islam and saving them from the fires of hell. The proposed mosque is seen as an instrument of salvation, with innovative methods justifying the ends. In contrast to hell, the joys and eternal bliss of paradise are presented as follows:

> And my dear respected brothers, contrary to all that, Allah has made *Jannat*, Allah has made paradise. It is such a place that a person can fulfil all his desires in the highest standard and manner that a person can think of…And my dear brothers, if a person wants to eat food, the highest standard and quality of food will be provided to him, and in the same manner if someone wants something to drink, the highest quality, the highest standard of drinking will be provided to him. In the same manner if a person wants to listen to sweet and melodious voices to the highest standard and highest quality of sound and voices will be provided to this person. Everything will be in the top quality which will be provided to this person. And sometimes Rasoolallah in his beautiful and sweet voice will recite the Holy Qur'an and because of that all the people of *jannat* will listen to the recitation of Rasoolallah. And my dear brothers, once in a week Allah will invite the people of *jannat* in his court and Allah will hold a feast for them and different types of dishes and food will be prepared for them and the taste which they will get when tasting that food they will not even get whilst staying in paradise. When consuming this food they will gain such pleasure and such taste that they did not even feel that in *Jannat*. Allah himself will recite the Qur'an, and when they will listen to the Qur'an they will get such enjoyment and entertainment from it that they will enjoy it even more than the food. And every word which Allah will read, clouds of *noor* will be made and it will shine on the people of *jannat* it will shower on them and because of that it will increase their handsomeness and beauty.[107]

Indeed, at one of the Thursday evening gatherings, the speaker was apt at reminding those gathered that ultimate success does not reside in this life but in the life to follow – the life that will be permanent, the life that will actually count. Ingrained into this world-view is the absolute fear of the power and ability of worldliness to corrupt and destroy the soul of a person thus barring them eternal paradise:

> Remember brothers that all the things we have here, our businesses, our cars, our houses, our money – what good is this to us? When we die can we take any of this with us? No! But just a little effort in the path of Allah will count for a lot in the hereafter".[108]

On a different Thursday evening the speaker said:

[107] Taken form the recording of a speech made by Ahmed Suleman Alkhatani – Chicago Ijtima 2009
[108] Thursday 24 September 2010 Gathering and talk at the Masrkaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

> We have to be sober in this life. We have been forbidden many things in this life. The temptations are there, if you be patient you will be rewarded when the time is over.[109]

It is precisely this reward that motivates the actions of TJ members, and a factor that should be recognised at the heart of the movement in London, Britain, and indeed the world over.

6.6 Dawah

The role of *dawah* is so important to TJ adherents that it cannot be separated from any other goal or aspect of their ideology. Indeed as has already been stated, *dawah* and the goal to construct the new mosque go hand in hand. The proposed new mosque will be a centre from which to organise *dawah*, but also without making an effort in *dawah*, the belief is that Allah will not grant the mosque. *Dawah* is so important to the movement that the founder referred to it as, 'the backbone of the entire body of Islam' and as the 'foundation, strength and success of Islam' (Ilyas in,No'mani 2001: 240). At a gathering at the Markaz Ilyas, one of the speakers informed adherents that the purpose of life is to bring as many people to Islam through *dawah*:

> It is not enough to give those in need food or clothes. If a man is starving and you give him food he will be hungry again...If you give him clothes then he will have them until they wear out, but true mercy is to inform them of Allah. True mercy is to teach them *salat*, because *salat* will last for life! We must not be content; we must not rest until every one around us learns *salat*, until everyone we know starts to come to the *masjid*.[110]

The goal of spreading the Tablighi version of Islam as a means of benefit to the whole community, whilst ambitious is a real and necessary goal for TJ. For TJ adherents the goal is a matter of life and death, for the person that accepts Islam is saved from damnation and will be able to taste the glories of paradise – a "gift" that TJ adherents

[109] Thursday 12 August 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[110] Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

want for all. It is here that the image arises of a movement that loves the world so much that they desire for everyone to adopt the Tablighi form of Islam, and therefore be guaranteed the delights of paradise, but at the same time insist that a failure to do so will result in eternal damnation, a damnation that is deserved. The speaker continued, "our main goal in life is to think about how many people I have told about Islam this week, and how I can improve this – *Dawah* is to be the purpose of life".[111] The speaker justified the reason as to why *dawah* has to be the purpose of life. It is because:

> Islam as a system is superior to every other form or system in life. It is above any other way of life. *Dawah* is the one thing that Muslims do that instils fears in the hearts of non-believers and this is because they know that Islam through *dawah* can overpower and overcome anything else.[112]

Such sentiments express the climax of a rhetorical style that is aimed at mobilising adherents into action. They are central to the rhetoric of the movement and something TJ adherents feel comfortable with. Whilst non-controversial to Tablighi members, these sentiments could prove problematic should TJ leaders express them in public. The speaker recognises that these statements are problematic with the wider society noting that so powerful is the work of TJ that it has the power to "instil fear in the hearts of non-believers". In the same vain, the speaker continued to rouse the congregation informing them that "effort in the path of Allah is never wasted", that even the "smallest of efforts can bring big changes".[113] It is here that TJ recognises its potential as a social movement, that through acting as a movement *en mass* it can change the nature of society. It is "through these efforts" the speaker argues that "there will come a time when we Muslims are in the majority".[114] This again is a form of motivational claims-making aiming to give

[111] Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[112] Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[113] Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[114] Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

a purpose and meaning to the energy and efforts of adherents in pursuit of the movement's goals. This is something the TJ's founder was keen to leave no doubt over:

> It has been established on the authority of the text of the Holy Qur'an and authentic Traditions that the entire Muslim Ummat, following the example of the Holy Prophet, has been deputed by Allah to convey His message to all nations of the World...The following verse is elucidating this fact: **You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong...**[Q. 3:110]. (Ilyas in, No'mani 2001: 217)

This verse, according to Ilyas, clearly states that the "Muslim Ummat" has 'been raised for the guidance of all other communities' and that the purpose of the creation of Muslims is so that they may 'serve all the other nations' in the sense that they make Islam known to others (Ilyas in, No'mani 2001: 217). The *Fazail-E-Amal* goes further in reminding its readers that 'Allah has also given the assurances that true believers will always dominate over non-believers and that non-believers will be left without any friend or ally' (Kandhlawi 2007a: 7). The speaker at the gathering on Thursday 11 March 2010, argued that this is an important message to act upon, because it was the message of Mohammad, a final revelation applicable for the rest of time.[115] For Ilyas, if the '*ummat* neglects this duty, it will not be fulfilling the function for which it was raised', loosing good grace from Allah (Ilyas in, No'mani 2001: 217). *Dawah* is the key to TJ's success – both in terms of new adherents, but also in the belief that through *dawah*, Allah will bestow blessings on the movement, allowing them to achieve other goals such as the construction of the Markaz Ilyas. Even more than this, as a means of mobilising the adherents in to the work of *dawah* TJ leaders have been adept at informing their congregations that they are the community of believers of which the *Qur'an* talks about. That is a 'chosen group' that has 'been made responsible for the reformation and well being of the entire *ummat*, rather all mankind to what is good' (Ilyas in, No'mani 2001: 218).

[115] Thursday 11 March 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

Keen to see how Tablighis interpreted the talk, I interviewed Ali, one of the adherents that I spoke with regularly. Ali agreed with the speaker, commenting that "now I am thinking about how to introduce the topic of Allah/*dawah* to my boss tomorrow". Ali stated that just as the speaker said, 'we have to engage all our neighbours; *dawah* is the purpose of our life". As well as this, Ali could sense that there was some unease surrounding the comments of the supremacy of Islam and noted that, "we also have to be good Muslims and then people will see that they have nothing to fear – people only fear *dawah* because they do not understand what it is".[116] The important thing to note is that when TJ leaders comment in public that TJ is an open movement, one that is working for the cohesion of the local community, this is not a lie. Indeed, TJ leaders view cohesion as stemming from the establishment of Islam as the governing norm in society, that far from Islam being oppressive or contrary to the beliefs of a majority of the community, it is a system of liberation. Muslims, as one other interviewee put it, 'have a heavy responsibility – every single person that does not have *deen* is our responsibility'.[117]

During Ramadan the call for *dawah* as the solution to the ills of the world was intensified at TJ gatherings. During the second Thursday of Ramadan, the speaker informed the adherents gathered that pursuing activities such as education, business or family without time for going out in the work of Allah, was a major error that people were committing. For a speaker this was a reason for Allah not bestowing his full blessings upon the *ummah*:

[116] Interview with Ali, Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[117] Interview with Waleed, 25 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

> When I want to study, I go to school for 20 years. What I am learning there? Electron and bacteria. 20/30 years standing there, learning electron and bacteria. Study Allah, the ulama say, study ALLAH for 40 days and 4 months – what they say? – They say NO. I don't need. And we don't know. Learning Allah and Allah's commandments, learning the Prophet and his *sunnah* for 40 days or four months, they say no we don't need. 4 YEARS and 4 YEARS AND 4 YEARS we need to study the bacteria cells and atom cells, that is the problem. Where is *Yakim*? Our *yakim* is in bacteria and the devil's document ahhh the certificate. Our *yakim* is in certificate. If I get the certificate I will have a good job, and I will have a good house, BUT if I study ALLAH I won't have anything. That's why I am losing my time – no. TO ALLAH BELONGS THE SKIES AND HEAVENS AND EARTH. ALLAH SAYS I OWN THE *DONYA* AND *AHER*. But this certificate, it cannot feed you, cannot sustain you. THEY GET THIS CERTIFICATE FOR 20 YEARS, BUT THEY HAVE PLENTY OF PROBLEMS. So how do we need that we have to live at peace and quality and passion and love? We have to study and go in the path of Allah, and learn the *deen* and come close to Allah. Who belongs the world – ALLAH NOT THE DOCUMENTS AND ATOMS AND ELECTRONS and computer science – no – how many take the certificate but die when they get certificate? And he pass away and without no good deeds. He never pray, he never knows Allah, he didn't know Allah. So please, WHO IS READY TO KNOW ALLAH FOR ONLY 40 DAYS AND 4 MONTHS? WHO IS READY? STAND UP INSHALLAH.[118]

This again serves to capture the "worldly unworldliness" of the TJ, as well as highlighting the effectiveness of such a strategy. An extraordinary amount of those gathered volunteered to take part in *dawah* missions following this talk. The following week, when I interviewed Jamal, a Tablighi university student in London, he noted that "going out in the path of Allah is the most important thing we can do, its only this that will bring benefit to our lives and to the lives of those around us".[119] Jamal informed me that he had already been on a 40 day *jamaat* as well as a number of three day *jamaats*. For Jamal resolving the then current issues around the mosque were clearly linked to making efforts in the path of Allah. "Its only once we have demonstrated that we can handle the responsibility through our proven efforts that Allah will be pleased and *inshallah* grant us the bigger responsibility of the new mosque".[120] In this sense, the goal of *dawah* is very clearly tied up not only with salvation, but also with success in the world.

[118] Thursday 19 August 2010 Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[119] Interview with Jamal, 19 August 2010, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London
[120] Interview with Jamal, 19 August 2010, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

Despite many Tablighis feeling that this is the only way to bring success, Birt and Lewis have highlighted instances where this ideology serves to alienate Tablighis from the wider community making them dependant on the movement. Birt and Lewis give credence to the view expressed by Dr. Mahmood Chandia of the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) that:

> Many students do not complete their examinations in science, medicine, law or journalism and use the excuse that we must give priority instead to revivalist tours of forty days, four months, or one year's duration – a central component of the activities of the Tablighi Jamaat (Birt and Lewis 2010: 108).

In this sense then, the *dawah* work of TJ whilst promoting success in the hereafter can also serve to contribute to the "breakdown" of society and stopping young people from achieving their potential in the here and now.

In a further bid to stress the primary importance of *dawah* as the essential and legitimate goal of the movement, one of the speakers utilised and played upon the language of human rights that have become so important in Western societies. TJ elevates *dawah* to the level of a human right, with the speaker stating that "people have a right to hear about Islam" and that "your mission should be to ensure to give everyone the RIGHT to know about Islam, especially other Muslims, to increase their knowledge and how those with no Islam can have Islam".[121] This is, in essence, what the goals of the movement are, and the construction of the new mosque, is seen as the means through which these goals will be achieved. The knowledge of possessing the truth and of propagating this through *dawah* acts to empower members of the movement. They see themselves as agents of "human rights" bringing the knowledge and right of salvation to others. As one senior member put it:

[121] Thursday 11 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

> Tablighi Jamaat gives people a goal in life. TJ do not talk about politics, but actually go out and do - they help to reinvigorate the spirit of Islam in individuals. What better sense of mission could there be than going out in groups and aiming to bring back Muslims to Islam? You can see the rewards very quickly![122]

6.7 Response to Notice of Enforcement Action

This section focuses on how TJ leaders and adherents responded to the Notice of Enforcement Against the use of the Markaz Ilyas. It is hoped that the section will have captured the mood and response to the situation at an intimate level – one that has been different to the public response of the movement (discussed in the next chapters). It is further hoped that this section allows for an analysis of how TJ beliefs, which have been the focus of this chapter, have been drawn upon by movement leaders and applied to a real and distressing situation.

On 21 January 2010, the LBN issued a Notice of Enforcement on the Markaz Ilyas affecting the current facilities on the site. The six-page document commented that the main reason for Enforcement Action is, 'it appears that there has been a breach of planning control' (LBN 2010: 1). The document continued to outline a myriad of specific breaches in planning regulations on the site including, 'without planning permission, the change of use of land and all buildings outlined in red on the attached map as a place of worship, the erection of various buildings and extensions...and the establishment of a hard standing as a car park...' (LBN 2010: 1). The argument was that TJ have been using buildings on the site illegally since the authorisation of temporary structures ran out in 2006. The document also instructed the Trustees that they were to 'cease the use of land and all buildings as a place of worship' (LBN 2010), effectively meaning the closure of

[122] Interview with Hamid, Thursday 22 October 2009, Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

the current 'temporary' mosque on the site. The Notice was to take effect form 4th March 2010, 'unless an appeal is made against it beforehand' (LBN 2010).

On that same Thursday, I attended the evening gathering at the Markaz Ilyas with the goal of seeking to analyse Tablighis' responses to the Notice of Enforcement, and to listen to the *bayan*. The mosque as usual was packed, and the atmosphere was tense. People sat in silence listening to the speaker and the translations, although no mention of the events that had occurred earlier in the day were made. This is not surprising as speakers at the Thursday evening gatherings are not usually drawn from the congregation, but rather come from other Tablighi Centres (Dewsbury, Nizamudin, Raiwind etc.). Surprisingly, however, there was no follow up talk to inform the adherents of what the response to the local authority would be, or even as to what might happen if the movement was evicted from the site. In an effort to find out what was going on, I spoke to several adherents present at the meeting in an informal way, although informing them of the purpose of the questions.

The first person to respond to the topic of the eviction said that the issue did not concern him and that "it will be a long time before they can move us out".[123] He commented that we should not waste our time worrying about such matters and that time would be better spent in putting our faith in Allah. With this he changed the conversation to one of time spent in the path of Allah. I spoke to two other adherents who were browsing books in the shop attached to the mosque – both refused to answer any questions regarding the enforcement action, commenting that it was not for them to say what action should be pursued. The fourth interviewee commented that "the matter is now in the hands of

[123] Participant 1, Thursday 21 January 2010, short interview following the Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, West Ham, London

Allah" and that it was not for us to worry about the situation. Another adherent who was willing to talk about the Notice of Enforcement commented that "for as long as we strive in the path of Allah then everything will be ok. We have to focus on what is immediate".[124] It appeared to me that the matter of the potential eviction of the movement from the site was "immediate", although no one was discussing it. This may have been due to issues around access, especially as members of the movement were alerted to increased interest from media commentators, as well as discomfort in speaking about such an issue to an academic they had not met before.

Present during the evening was Ali who agreed to an interview. In response to the question "I hear there are some problems with the mosque here with the Local Authority?" Ali commented,

> Yes, but don't worry about that. Of course, we will come here until we can, and if we can't we will go somewhere else. What is this? This is just a building – it doesn't mean anything. We can do the work from somewhere else, but let's not worry about that. You keep coming here. We need to focus as the speaker said on *dawah*, and that issue [the Enforcement Notice] can be left to others.[125]

The "others" to which Ali referred to are TJ leaders in London, who have been charged to direct the dealings of the movement in the most appropriate way for the furtherance of the objectives of the movement. The final person I spoke to during the evening gave a more revealing insight as to how grassroots members were reacting to the news. The respondent stated that:

> Success in this world is granted by Allah and by Allah alone. In order to gain this success from Allah, the Muslims have to make more effort – more effort in prayers, more effort in *iman* and *amal*, more effort in *dawah*. If the Muslims do this then Allah will be pleased with the Muslims and will give us success. We must not worry about what will happen because Allah will provide

[124] Participant 4, Thursday 21 January 2010, short interview following the Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, West Ham, London
[125] Participant 5 (Ali), Thursday 21 January 2010, short interview following the Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, West Ham, London

> for us. If we renew our efforts then we will stay here and we will also *inshallah* build the new mosque.[126]

The response given by the majority of Tablighi respondents that evening represents an accurate view of the way in which TJ has traditionally responded to a myriad of events – whether they are social, economic or political. Rather than directly engaging with the matter at hand, the response has been that woe has befallen the Muslim community, primarily because of Muslims themselves failing to please Allah with their actions, and that the remedy for this is increased *dawah*. It came as no surprise then, when the speaker at the gathering on 24 June 2010, noted that 'if we come on to the right path, just as Allah showed those nations who came before us, when they followed the command of Allah, Allah made them successful".[127] This is something that much of TJ's primary literature speaks of. There is no better example of this than in the words of Ilyas, whose advice seems strikingly poignant to the situation,

> When you are not applying Allah's commands on your self and are not stopping your self from what Allah has forbidden, and are not fulfilling those commands of Allah which are for subjects, then, on what ground the administration of the world be given to you? The divine intention behind giving the believers government on earth, is only that they should run the system of Allah's commands and wishes in the world. When you are not doing this today even in your personal life, how can it be expected for tomorrow from you, giving you the rule? (Ilyas in No'mani 2001: 35-6).

Whilst this advice directly relates to Muslims being granted administrative powers by Allah, the situation can also well apply to that of TJ in London. The belief from the majority of adherents is the same – that if a greater effort is made within one's own personal life, and if Allah can see that as a community Tablighis are fulfilling the commandments of Allah, then they will be granted leave to remain on the current site, and permission to construct their new mosque. This opinion is further reflected in the words of another Tablighi ideologue:

[126] Participant 6, Thursday 21 January 2010, short interview following the Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, West Ham, London
[127] Thursday 24 June 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

> Today everyone is crying out that 'this has happened; that has happened', but no one is prepared to think over why this is so; everyone is complaining that 'peace is not present, comfort is not present, safety is not present', but no one is prepared to ask Him the solution. Allah says that when people will change their selves, I shall change their situations...(Ahmad Ansari in, No'mani 2001: 90).

It is here that a distinction emerges between an elite and instrumentally aware leadership and the rank and file members of the movement in London. For Tablighi adherents, the belief is that an intensification of their efforts in the faith is a means to pleasing the creator. It is only through submitting to Allah's will and enacting correct deeds that Allah will grant the outcome that is sought. This is the same belief that is propagated by Tablighi leaders, although Tablighi leaders have recognised that for the goals of the movement to succeed in Britain, then they also need to demonstrate that they recognise established rules and norms of the planning process and that they are willing to abide by these irrespective of their own religious views.

On 28 January 2010 at the Markaz Ilyas, the speaker, towards the end of his talk told a parable of Joseph and Pharaoh. Joseph, the speaker reminded those present, was "stuck in a well, taken into captivity, bottom of the pile, but because he was sincere and remembered Allah was taken by Allah and put at the top of the system."[128] The speaker continued that it was Allah who granted Joseph the powers and respect that he commanded, and that without Allah he would have been nothing. The speaker went on to argue:

> We now cannot achieve glories without the will of Allah. It does not matter what politicians say, what the media says, it is only through working for and remembering Allah that we can succeed.[129]

[128] Thursday 28 January, 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, West Ham, London
[129] Thursday 28 January, 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, West Ham, London

Whilst no direct mention of the Notice of Enforcement was made during the talk, I could not help but feel that this was a strategic rallying call to adherents, reminding them that no matter what action the Local Authority wanted to take, the matter was in the hands of Allah, and that they could make a difference through reorienting their own lives towards a strict adherence of Islam, as well as through helping others to do the same. This theme returned to the Thursday evening talks on 24 June 2010:

> Don't curse your rulers and the people who are governing you. It is not they who are bringing bad decisions for you. Our own *amal*, our own actions are the cause of the problems that are befalling us. We have to create such strength in our *iman*, that following the commands of Allah become easy for us.[130]

Whilst the grassroots adherents of the movement in London may have been advised to pursue traditional Tablighi solutions to problems, the leadership, as will emerge over the course of the next two chapters, pursued a different strategy. Although this chapter focuses on the claims-making and responses of TJ adherents at Thursday evening *bayans*, the TJ leadership in London have engaged in a dual response. This process will have had to be discussed as part of the mosque's consultation process with all or most of the Trustees and senior leaders present. Whilst inspiring their members to place an increased effort into the work of the movement, the leadership have recognised that in order to achieve actual success in local politics, there are a number of set rules that have to be followed. Far from disengaging and turning inwards to a traditional and unbending vision of Islam, London TJ leaders chose to pursue a policy of hiring professional consultants to present their case to the Council, and to develop a media strategy to improve the image of the movement. This strategy has been controversial – one that is in apparent contradiction of the ethos of the movement. This is something that Reetz and Gugler also

[130] Thursday 24 June, 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilays, Abbey Mills Riverine Centre, West Ham, London

reported as part of their research on TJ in Europe – that TJ is 'obliged to adapt to the local situation in Europe, where they hope to create conditions that enable Muslims to live their lives in consonance with Islam' (Reetz and Gugler 2009).

That the TJ's council in London was not totally in unison over this strategy is reflected in the start-stop relationships with Indigo Public Affairs and their other professional consultants (to be discussed in the following chapter). The fact that no member of the movement was willing to comment on the reasons for changing partnerships with media consultants, as well as the suggestion that the international leadership of the movement were opposed to such a large scale development, shows that there were long and heated discussions within the movement (Taylor 2009). The TJ's London committee was split between seeking outside help and relying on Allah to provide for them. This, by February of 2011 was mainly resolved, with a spokesman for the Trustees telling me that the leadership has realised that they have to be practical, and as such has decided to 'hire the best team that money can buy'.[131] It was not the government's policy of social cohesion or of wanting to work in a multicultural way that TJ leaders in London decided to adapt their strategies. Rather there was an understanding that being practical and abiding by the rules is the only way to convince the planning inspector of their suitability to redevelop the Abbey Mills site. As will be seen in the following chapter, TJ leaders embarkation on the process of engagement would lead to them acquiring new skills, becoming more familiar with the context in which they have to operate.

The initial justification for a departure from normal policy may be found in the words of TJ's second international *amir,* Yusuf Kandhalawi:

[131] Conversation with Mr. Solad Mohammed (Trustee of the Anjuman-E-Islahul-Muslimeen of London, UK), 9/02/2011

> It is made clear in Q. 60:7-9 that this prohibition of a 'moral alliance' with non-Muslims does not constitute an injunction against normal friendly relations with such of them that are not hostile to Muslims and their faith. By 'those who are not of your kind', are meant only people whose enmity to Islam and its followers has become apparent through their behaviour and their utterances. (Maulana Yousuf in, No'mani 2001: 132-33).

It is apparent from this that given the consultants advising the TJ are working on behalf of the propagation of Islam, even though they may not be Muslim, the TJ are not barred from entering into an alliance with them, because they have not expressed any enmity towards Islam. This public based strategy will be analysed in next two chapters of the thesis, although it is worth noting here that due to the strict hierarchical nature of the movement, the leadership have not had to provide any further justification for the strategy to the base of membership.

One of the most popular parodies for the world that is frequently used in Tablighi circles, and which is of relevance to the response of TJ leaders, is that of a 'toilet'. This was something the speaker at the gathering on 25 February 2010 made clear:

> This world is like a toilet. If a man needs to go, but holds it in people tell him to go or otherwise something bad will happen. So he goes and soon he finishes and returns. But does anyone want to spend more time in the toilet than they have to? If they spend a lot of time there, people will worry and say why are they taking so long? Are they OK?[132]

The speaker explained that going to the toilet is a necessity but not a purpose. Just as with living in this world, we must not spend too much time in worldliness, but rather focus on the purpose, which is *amal*. This principle can easily be applied to the way in which TJ are interacting over the plans for the construction of the Markaz Ilyas, highlighting one of the ways in which traditional beliefs may influence behaviour in the public sphere. It could be argued that it is appropriate for the movement to treat the

[132] Thursday 25 February 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

whole process of engaging over the construction efforts as a toilet – one can spend time and funds on initiatives that will further this ambition, although one should always be cautious not to fall into the trap of treating the initiatives as ends rather than means.

It was not until Thursday 5 July 2010, that TJ leaders allowed their public strategy to permeate the relatively private Thursday evening gathering at the Markaz Ilyas. Waiting in the grounds of the mosque for the duration of the evening were members of ECORYS survey research team, instructed by the Trustees of the London TJ to consult and survey the adherents. One of the members of the ECORYS team commented that the purpose of the study was to "consult with those who used the mosque facility as part of a renewed effort to develop new plans for this site".[133] It was confirmed that TJ were to contest the "eviction notice", which was a process that had already been started by the Trustees, and that a master plan for the new mosque would also be submitted in the near future. Senior members of the movement were standing with members of the research team enjoining the adherents to take part in the survey and that this was a part of "the efforts to do to do the work of Allah". This indicates that the majority of people filling in the survey would have been aware of at least some of the circumstances surrounding the on going legal issues with the site, even though these had not been raised during the Thursday evening talks.

The consultation process signalled that TJ were ready to engage with the planning processes, feeling confident enough to go public with the strategy at what was a busy Thursday evening at the mosque. As will be discussed in the chapter focusing on the

[133] Member of ECORYS survey research team, Thursday 5 July 2010, Gathering and talk at the Markaz Ilyas, West Ham, London

Public Inquiry, this can be regarded as a prime example of TJ leaders engaging in a more practical way. What was once a strategy kept separate from the 'sacred' work of the movement was now fully disclosed and as such marks a point of no (or limited) return. It should be stressed, however, that in light of the above discussion, TJ leaders remain fully aware that the process is a means and not an end in itself – something that will be further examined in the next chapter, focusing on the TJ's public strategies between 2005-2010.

7. The Tablighi Jamaat in Transition: 2005 – 2010

7.1 Introduction

Having argued in the previous chapter that TJ has primarily been a movement focused on, and motivated by a strong desire for the eternal and for salvation, this chapter now looks at how TJ leaders have managed the process of actively negotiating the here and now. This will help highlight the way the movement in London operates on two different levels – that of inward spirituality and that of having to engage with a secular political process – with the sacred often informing the secular. Since 2005 TJ leaders have realised that in order to achieve the goal of constructing their new mosque in London, a reconsideration of its previously stated apolitical nature, and an embarkation on the process of engagement with local and national political structures is necessary. This chapter charts the London TJ's transition from a movement fixated on salvation – in essence a religious theocratic movement - to a social movement. In doing this, the chapter seeks to understand the ways in which TJ (as well as other Muslim groups in the west) seek to adapt to and engage with the state and other institutions in order to advance their objectives. This chapter is about demonstrating how engagement works at a practical level, emphasising catalysts in TJ's process of change.

This chapter is divided into five sections, each exploring a different aspect of the London TJ's process of transition. The first places the London TJ's attempts at constructing their new mosque into the overall context of mosque building in Britain. This charts the recent history of the project showing that what could have been a mildly controversial scheme, once imbued with symbolic significance and affected by the shifting local and global contexts following 9/11 and 7/7, came to represent the most fiercely contested and internationally recognised mosque construction project. It is precisely because of the

mounting scale and increasing symbolic value of the project in the post 7/7, 2012 Olympic Games context, that TJ leaders in London have had to re-evaluate their strategy, taking on a more community minded approach.

The second section examines the initial attempts of TJ leaders to alter their modes of operation in London, in order to secure permission for their project. This includes analysing why planning consultants and PR experts were hired, the establishment of a website linked to the project, a YouTube site featuring videos from senior Tablighis, a public consultation day held at the site of the mosque, as well as a number of public debates held between TJ activists and their opponents. This marks a distinct shift from a position of (chosen) isolation, to one of active and rigorous engagement – something that has been alien to TJ in London, Britain and further a filed.

The third section, taking a social movement approach, examines opposition to the London TJ's plans, showing how movements can be stifled in their objectives by local and national campaigns. This provides an opportunity from which to view the "framing battles" between TJ and their opponents, demonstrating how movements frame and re-frame messages in order to ensure their resonance with the widest audience. With the securitisation of Islam following 9/11 and 7/7, Islamic organisations often have a difficult time ensuring that their perspective resonates with the wider society. TJ has not been helped by the numerous allegations that individual members of the movement have been associated and in some cases prosecuted for acts of terrorism. This has encouraged TJ leaders in London to take a more robust approach to community engagement with a strong emphasis on countering allegations of terrorism.

The fourth section analyses interviews with senior members of the different planning bodies in London that have been involved with the project, providing a perspective on the London TJ's attempts at engagement and interaction at an "official" level. The chapter concludes through placing the London TJ's attempts at engagement into perspective, including a discussion of the rationale for the movement's entry into the realm of the political, arguing that the process of engagement is not as simple as one would expect; that groups who successfully manage to negotiate the process have long experience in the workings of the system, and that the post 9/11 atmosphere has added an extra level of scrutiny to any project involving Islamic organisations.

7.2.1 Setting the Context: The Power of Symbols

Before turning to the main discussion, it is important to note that the two main factors affecting the way TJ leaders in London interacted with British institutions and the wider public came at practically the same time. Both, in some ways are specific to the context of London, although the second may be seen as resonant across Europe and the wider western world. The first of these factors was London's winning bid on 6 July 2005 to host the Olympic Games in 2012. The second factor came the next morning as the celebrations of the previous day were cut short by the terrorist attacks on London on 7 July 2005. Terrorists had detonated bombs at several prominent London locations in the name of Islam - three bombs were detonated in the underground transport system and one on a bus. These killed 56 people (including the four suicide bombers), injured hundreds more, and brought the capital's public transport system to a standstill. These calculated acts of terror had been 'impeccably timed, as they simultaneously silenced London's celebrations and revealed international security concerns about hosting the Olympic

Games there' (DeHanas and Pieri 2011: 799). Government, media, and public attention turned to focus on Islamic groups and Muslims in Britain as a whole, although there have been important and specific implications for TJ. The TJ, which prior to 7/7 was a little known albeit global Islamist movement, was to come under intense scrutiny and this was because the movement had plans to construct a mosque adjacent to the main site of the 2012 Olympic Games (Baird 2005).

The fact that TJ's site for re-development was situated next to the land that was designated for use by the 2012 Olympic Games, transformed the nature of the project, propelling the movement into the spotlight. What was once seen as a comparatively worthless piece of contaminated land on the edge of East London suddenly became a significant portion of land at the centre of London's Olympic development proposals. The land immediately became imbued with national and symbolic worth – this was a piece of land that millions, potentially billions of people viewing the Games on television would see as the cameras panned out or gave aerial views. The land and what was on it would be symbolic of 21st Century Britain, an image that the rest of the world would see, and as such became emotionally charged. What would have once been a mildly controversial project suddenly became a matter of national and international importance. Matters were further complicated not least because of the still open wounds of the 7/7 bombings on the capital. Commentators speculated over fears of terrorist activity, especially in light of the attacks on London, which coming after the announcement of London's successful bid, linked the atrocities to a fear that it was a taste for what would actually be attempted by Muslim extremists during the Games (Doward 2006c; Langley et al. 2006; O'Neill and Boyes 2006).

When it comes to examining why projects such as the London "mega-mosque" create such intense reactions from local populations, it is important to consider some of the philosophies behind the power and meaningfulness of public spaces. One of the ways places can acquire their significance and identity, as well as their ability to retain a strong and 'primordial' hold over individuals is through acting as repositories of collective memory (Olick and Robbins 1998; Boyer 2001). This notion of memory has become increasingly important especially given the trend in the western world to 'announce the death of the past and the consequent inability to render and recall those events that disappeared behind us' (Noero 2003). The building of large and what are often perceived to be 'alien' structures in a community space can, therefore, bring emotions to the forefront of the debate, as well as rigorous campaigns of contestation.[134] Buildings that serve religious or ethnic purposes are seen as being especially controversial as they are not always seen as beneficial by the wider community. They can be portrayed as counter productive to the government's favoured policy of community cohesion. The irony of the matter is that unlike mega-malls and corporate skyscrapers, mosques are the foundation of the community for practicing Muslims. It is also important to recall that the mosque unlike other religious buildings is not used just for worship, but following in the footsteps of Mohammad who used it as the centre of all Islamic activities, is the nucleus of the Islamic community, a symbol of identity, strength, politics and justice (Imamuddin et al. 1985; Kanmaz 2002; Mohammad 1996).[135]

[134] A non religious example of this can be found in the London Borough of Newham (coincidently the same borough where the contested mega-mosque is to be based) where local residents have been vigorously contesting the construction of a supermarket on the plot where a current vibrant street market (The Queen's Market) stands.

[135] Indeed, as Mohammad Ilyas once said, '*Masjids* are the daughters of the *Masjid* of the Holy Prophet. Therefore all those activities should take place in them which took place in the *Masjid* of the Holy Prophet. In the *Masjid* of the Holy Prophet, besides *salat*, the activities concerning education and training and all the activities concerning the work of *dawat* of *deen* were carried out. *Jamaats*, whether they were for the preaching of Islam or they were for the teaching of *deen*, were too sent from the *Masjid*; even the troops were organised in the *Masjid*. We want that in our *masjids*, every work should be done in the same pattern' (Mohammad Ilyas in No'mani 2001: 207).

For Muslim communities mosques have come to symbolise the setting where Muslims can join in worship as well as in the expression of their religious identities. Historically, however, Islamic structures have been isolated within 'invisible' prayer rooms found in private homes or in the backrooms of Muslim businesses.[136] These "garage" mosques have not carried any public symbolic value and were for the most part hidden from the wider society. The founding of mosques represents an evolution of Islam from the private to the public sphere, as well as well as according Islam symbolic significance in the architectural landscaping of towns and cities. Although this has sometimes been described as the 'Islamicisation' of urban spaces (Cesari 2005) on another level mosques can be seen as a symbol of an ethnic population having settled and put roots into an area, a territorial marker that also acts as a reassurance for the community allowing its members to stay connected with their ancestral heritage (Manco and Kanmaz 2005). In the post 7/7 period, for many of the British public however, mosques have sometimes come to be viewed as conveyer belts of terrorism. Programmes such as Channel 4's 'Undercover Mosque' showing covert footage of extremism and intolerance from mosques across Britain, furthered this image (Dispatches 2007). Despite debates over the accuracy of the footage the view came to be that what was going on in one mosque was likely to be occurring in all, thus lending further ammunition to those who argued that the mosque would be a barrier to cohesion in the community, and another hurdle the TJ had to overcome.

[136] The same pattern can be found in other European countries too, for example, in Germany in the 1990s there were approximately 2,400 improvised and largely invisible Muslim places of prayer found in cellars, shops and factories. See: (Jonker and Kapphan 1998)

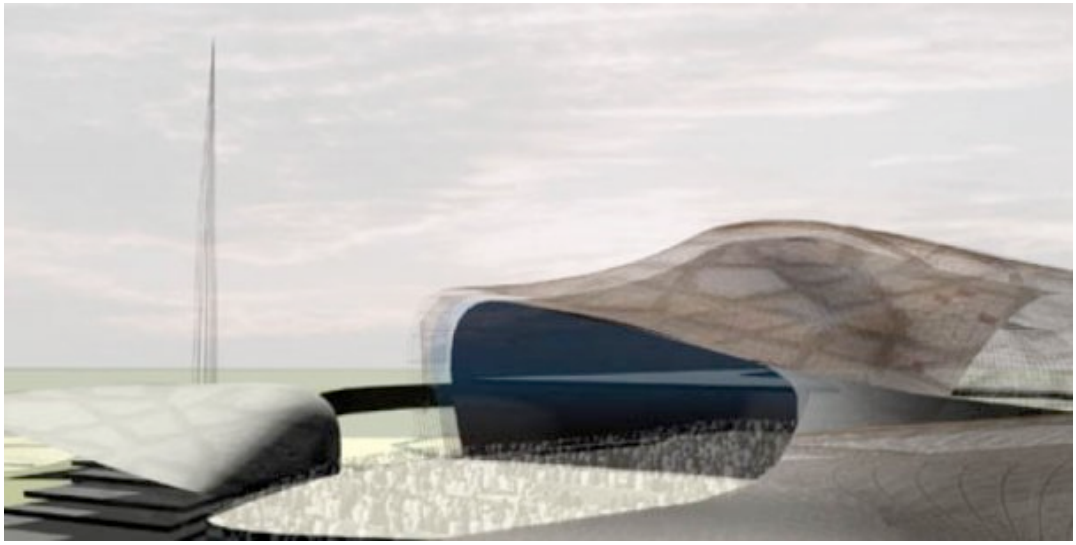
7.2.2 The Contentious Politics of Mosque Construction: The case of Markaz Ilyas

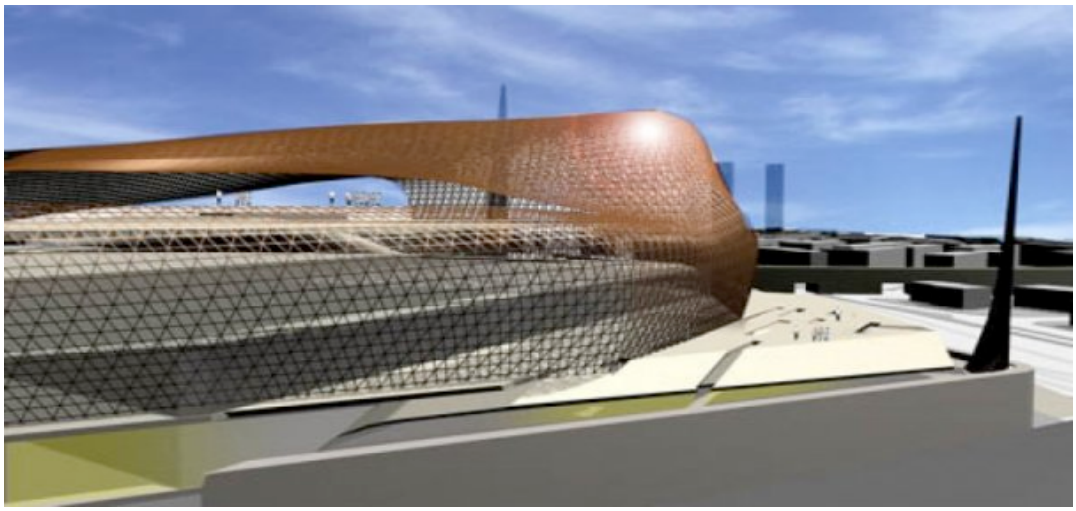
One of the first instances propelling the London TJ into the media spotlight and forefront of public attention, outside of the contextual factors outlined above, was the publication of the design of the proposed new mosque and accompanying facilities by London based architect, Ali Mangera of Mangera Yvars Architects. The design for what at the time was called the "London Markaz", came in 2005, after the 7/7 bombings and after Mangera had won the competition to design the new building in light of the site's new position of prominence next to the location of the 2012 Games (Vaughan 2007). The symbolic importance of the proposed new mosque situated near the Olympics Stadium was not lost on Mangera or TJ. Mangera's vision for the development of the site centred around designs for a modern, almost futuristic and eco-friendly mosque with a capacity for 70,000 worshippers, an Islamic garden, library, Muslim boarding school and residential accommodation.[137]

For Magera, it was important that the mosque not only be an iconic new structure highlighting London as a multicultural capital, but that it would also reflect something of the character of TJ themselves. On his website, Mangera states that the project has adopted the idea of "Dawat" - that is the propagation or invitation to Islam - which is central to the ideology and methods of TJ. This, Mangera hoped would be achieved by the mosque 'physically and metaphorically reaching out to provide large urban connections which invite people into the building from West Ham Station, the Greenway and beyond'.[138] Foreseeing the controversial nature of proposing a building where a main objectives was to be the proselytisation of people to the Tablighi version of Islam,

[137] http://www.myaa-arq.com/ (accessed: 2/05/2011)
[138] http://www.myaa-arq.com/ (accessed: 2/05/2011)

Mangera added the caveat that for him, this also meant the creation of a space where 'Muslims and non-Muslims interact, debate and promote a greater understanding between ideology, faith and humanity'.[139]





(Images 4&5: Ali Mangera's designs for the Markaz Ilyas: http://www.myaa-arq.com/)

[139] http://www.myaa-arq.com/ (accessed: 2/05/2011)

Many commentators questioned Magera's assertions over the inter-faith aspect to the mosque, not least because TJ has traditionally shunned inter-faith dialogue as a waste of time:

> [TJ] was born from Hindu-Muslim conflict and from proselytizing competition between the two communities in conflict: Ilyas used to say that there were two threats from the Muslim community: missionary movements like *shuddhi*, and secularization. It cannot therefore be said that the discourse of the Tablighi Jamaat on other religious communities is irenic and only aimed at facilitating religious coexistence. This movement was born out of conflict; and the defence of the community and of its religious boundaries is central in its motivations, as it is central in the whole Deobandi tradition (Gaborieau 2006: 61).

Despite this, it was the size of this proposed development more than anything else that caused a major public outcry. One newspaper article at the time noted that the proposed mosque 'will be the biggest house of worship in the UK: it will hold 70,000 people – only 10,000 fewer than the Olympic stadium, and 67,000 more than the largest Christian Cathedral' (Steyn 2005). *The Guardian* commented on the size of the project saying that due to its size, 'you would end up having a completely Muslim community…it would create a separate district, a parallel society' (Doward 2006a). It was at this time that Newham Borough Councillor and foremost opponent of the scheme, Alan Craig, described the project as the "mega-mosque".

As part of the on going debate over community cohesion, Mangera's designs sparked a national discussion as to the acceptability of such a colossal mosque in London as well as shining a spotlight on TJ as the movement behind the mosque. The *Architects Journal* in 2007 reported on the headline story that Mangera had been sacked from the 'controversial' project, noting that Mangera's design had 'attracted a mountain of negative press coverage' which had made the position of the Trustees untenable (Vaughan 2007). When questioned about this episode in the history of the ongoing re-development schemes, the response from TJ's team was:

> "Unfortunately the vision that the architect, Ali Mangera, was producing for the Site did not match that of the community and it was determined in May 2007 that a full architectural competition should take place to appoint an architect who could deliver in accordance with a development and design brief for the site" (Jones 2011: 25)

It was at this point that London TJ leaders considered an alternative strategy to the development of their proposed mosque – a strategy that would require a clean break and an emphasis on community engagement and partnership. TJ leaders in London distanced themselves from the proposals, commenting that the plans had been designed by Mangera, and did not reflect the movement's vision. TJ leaders in London further appointed Allies and Morrison as the new architects, and capped the size of the mosque to a capacity of 12,000 worshippers (Jones 2011) – still the largest mosque in the country, but smaller than the original 70,000. The switch to Allies and Morrison highlights one of the ways in which movement leaders can attempt to overcome negative publicity – namely through re-framing the image of the movement. Through being associated with Allies and Morrison, a British firm entrusted with national architectural projects such as the Royal Observatory at Greenwich and the Royal Festival Hall in London, TJ leaders hoped that their scheme too might be recast as national project.[140] This was also the idea when TJ leaders employed Malcolm Reading Consultants, a firm with royal connections having been entrusted with the trusteeship of the Historic Royal Palaces –'a government appointment – including the Tower of London and Kensington Palace' (LapidoMedia 2011).

The *Architects Journal*, noted that it is more than likely that Mangera and his architectural firm were being used as a 'scapegoat' and as a convenient means for TJ leaders to distance themselves from bad press (Vaughan 2007). Indeed, contrary to what

[140] http://www.alliesandmorrison.com/projects/selected/ (accessed: 25/05/2011)

the London TJ's Trust have said, Mangera insists that he had reached his vision for the proposed mosque through having "stuck to the brief" (Vaughan 2007). In a further discussion of the matter, Kieran Long argued that 'the client [TJ] has acted first incompetently (allowing bad press to accumulate around the project for two years), and then underhandedly, unceremoniously jettisoning the youngsters [Mangera Yvars] for a safe pair of hands [Allies and Morrison]' (Long 2007). It is this safe pair of undoubtedly British hands that TJ leaders hoped would make all the difference, serving to highlight their practical thinking.

The controversial and contested nature of what has become known as the "mega-mosque" project is not something that has been exclusive to TJ or to London, but rather a part of a more marked phenomenon, which has emerged in Europe and other western countries in the past decades. Among the most striking changes in urban space in the west has been the establishment of a visible and physical presence of Islam represented through the symbol of the mosque (Eade 1996), at times causing unease and increased public debate over Islamic architecture. For Allievi the issue is not just about mosque architecture but rather, 'the real problem...is the relationship of Europe with Islam, on the one hand; and the relationship that the Muslims have with Europe and the west, on the other' (Allievi 2010: 47). Cities have for some time now been key sites for the spatialisation of power projects, whether political, economic or religious (Sassen 2003). As Cesari puts it, it is the mosque that is 'central to Islam's urban visibility and is the centre of Muslim communal life' (Cesari 2005).

Every project that concerns the construction of a mosque entails laborious and time-consuming processes in which leaders of the Muslim community must discuss, consult

and negotiate with local, city and regional authorities' (Cesari 2005). A failure on the behalf of the developers to engage in the correct way can often result in disastrous outcomes for the project. As has been seen with the case of the "mega-mosque", TJ leaders' initial inexperience and inability to interact with the local authority at the level expected of them left a sour note. It is part of the construction process of mosques that Islam goes from being invisible to being unwanted' (Cesari 2005). Planning authorities when deciding on the construction of any structures must take into account what effect the building will have on the local environment, and the extent to which the new development will be harmonious within its environment (Dwyer 2000). In 2005, TJ leaders in London awoke to this realisation: it has been their desire to make the mosque more "wanted" in the community that has motivated them to initiate a process of change.

7.3 The Tablighi Jamaat and Public Relations

7.3.1: The TJ's Website

Having discussed the context and early developments to the London TJ's proposed mosque, this section analyses the early set of strategies leaders used in order to mitigate some criticisms to the project. These tactics included the hiring of project management and public relations consultants, the establishment of media and web resources, as well as efforts to engage with local and national publics, the media and government bodies. Of course, such tactics are not unique to TJ or to Muslim groups, but are utilised by organisations wishing to advance major construction projects in any given city. What is unique to the Tablighi case is that this is a movement that traditionally rejected any form of publicity, remaining aloof from the processes of engagement. As Chapter 6

highlighted, the mantra for the movement has been "concern yourselves only with the heavens above and the grave below, and never about the world in between". The London TJ's new strategy as of 2005 marks a turning point in the way movement leaders in London now function.

Between 2005 and 2007 TJ leaders allowed their project to be defined by their opponents – their public silence during this period only served to promote their image as an 'isolated and secretive network' (DeHanas and Pieri 2011: 808). Following the large scale, and on the whole, negative debates in the media around the project, London TJ leaders made the unprecedented step of hiring a PR firm – Indigo Public Affairs – to advise and manage the movement's media relations (O'Neill 2007; Murray and Groves 2007). This was a bold move indeed. For TJ members, their absolute belief in the ability of Allah to provide for them has meant that the movement does not need to dabble in western techniques and innovations or the hiring of consultants. Why then did the London TJ leaders in 2007 break with the norms of the movement and hire a western and secular PR firm? According to a number of sources, including TJ leaders themselves, in 2006 amidst the public furore around the mosque, advice was sought form Sohail Sarbuland – a local Muslim sympathetic to TJ but not a member, and importantly (due to his professional knowledge of advancing property developments) director of London based Crossier Properties LTd (Perlez 2007a).

As a both a Muslim and sympathiser of TJ, the Trustees were able to trust Sarbuland allowing him to be an intermediary between TJ and the complex world of property development and media engagement. Sarbuland, at the time pledged to financially back a part of the project and to manage the planning process through to submission of a formal

planning application to Newham Council. In early 2007 he was responsible for bringing in the triumvirate of Indigo Public Affairs, new architects Allies and Morrison and property consultants GVA Grimley (Gilliat-Ray and Birt 2010: 145).[141] This put new direction and energy into the project, and spurred on the round of media and public consultation initiatives that came to define TJ during the period 2007-2009.

Indigo Public Affairs is a London based public relations firm specialising in community consultation and political communications advice. According to Indigo's website, their goal is to 'help our clients achieve planning consent' and states that, 'we have an outstanding track record...Many of our team are politicians themselves - including many who have been on their own planning committee'.[142] London TJ leaders sought out a specialised firm with wide ranging experience and political connections that could help advance the project. Indigo lost no time in establishing a website for the project aimed at providing relevant facts and up-to-date information on the progress of the development for the media and public. The website (www.abbeymillsmosque.com) was later further developed as part of a response to Newham Concern's website, which was in opposition to the project and which will be discussed below (www.megamosquenothanks.com). The use of the internet as a means of providing information about the movement although an innovation for TJ, was a way in which they could frame the debate around the mosque, as well as re-frame the image of the movement so as to resonate with the wider British society.

For the majority of organisations the establishment of a website is an ordinary part of

[141] Information from Peter Minoletti of the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. The exact same information is also available on the anti mega-mosque website www.megamosquenothanks.com (accessed 7/05/2011).
[142] http://www.indigopublicaffairs.com/ (accessed: 13/03/2009)

everyday life. For the London TJ, as seen in chapter 6, it was controversial; a move many within the wider movement saw as an unacceptable innovation, a reliance on western methods, and allowing *donya* or worldly desires to be the driving force - something the movement in Britain had not done before. This demonstrates that TJ leaders in London have been pioneering in their methods and that TJ leaders have enough autonomy to oversee a process of adaptation to local contexts as a means for ensuring the survival of the movement. Following the Notice of Enforcement on the TJ's site, the Abbey Mills website was dismantled, in part due to not making much of a difference to opinion about the project, and in part due to a perceived failure of the overt PR strategy that TJ leaders had pursued. For a brief time following the Notice of Enforcement, the movement was thrown into a period of introspection, questioning of the validity of having delved into novel strategies and not fully resting in the belief that Allah and Allah alone would grant success. A new toned-down website was launched following the Public Inquiry in 2011 (http://riverinecentrenewham.co.uk/).

Whilst the original website was still operational, one could access different relevant facts and figures surrounding the project and TJ themselves. The website shows how social movements attempt to organise information about issues important to them. Due to the limited information about TJ at this time it comes as no surprise that one of the sections on the website was dedicated to providing a 'brief overview' of the movement. According to this section, TJ is a Muslim missionary and revival movement, which has an estimated 70-80 million followers worldwide. It is explained that the goals of the movement are to 'bring spiritual awareness to the world's Muslims, promote good morals, social integration and cultural exchange with other communities..."[143] Having

[143] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PBN=TablighiJamaatHome (accessed: 27/10/2007)

identified 'social integration and cultural exchange' as an emerging theme in the broader framing of the construction project, it is clear that TJ leaders were keen to tap into this and self-frame in this way. The statement had been developed by Indigo and did not necessarily resonate with the messages imparted to the grassroots members of the movement, which until then, had stressed a separation from mainstream society as a means of maintaining boundaries of Islamic purity. This captures that movements engage in the framing process as a means of ensuring the success of their objectives.

The attempt at framing the movement as modern and forward thinking was further captured in the 'overview' section of the website with claims that the movement's activities stand for 'democracy and freedom', and that:

> It is intended that followers should become pure, good and practical humans, role models, hard working and law abiding modern citizens, bringing benefit and stability to society'.[144]

From a grassroots perspective TJ is not modern or innovative, instead believing that the solutions to the ills of the world lie in the strict observance of the laws of Islam as well as redirecting one's own life to the exact pattern as lived by Mohammad and the first generations of Muslims. Indeed as has been described in chapter 6, TJ adherents often use modern cultural practices in order to preach against those very things. The above reference then, must be viewed as a direct strategy by Indigo to re-frame TJ as modern and vibrant, as a movement resonating with the context and cultures of London and Britain. Whilst TJ members may be uncomfortable with such an image of the movement, TJ also regards a strict observance of Islamic principles as forward thinking, a part of Islamic modernism, and as having the capacity to create decent and honest citizens.

[144] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PBN=TablighiJamaatHome (accessed: 27/10/2007)

One of the most important elements of the website was the FAQs page, which aimed to answer many of the recurring questions being asked by the local population and the media at large. The page was cleverly titled "some myths explored", giving the impression that much of what had been said in the press and other public arenas concerning the project was not wholly true. A prime example of this was the response to the question over the size of the mosque. Figures ranged between 40,000 and 70,000 worshippers. The response was that these figures have been 'widely exaggerated' and that the mosque would only accommodate up to 12,000 worshippers.[145] Whilst it is true that the original designs for the mosque proposed a structure accommodating up to 70,000 worshippers, London TJ leaders clarified the situation through giving definitive information that this number had now been reduced. The latest plans for the new mosque suggest that capacity will be 9,500 worshippers (Jacobs 2012). An end was put to the speculation over whether Mangera - the original architect - was still involved with the project: 'we have appointed world class architects Allies and Morrison to design the mosque and the site'.[146]

In a different article posted on the site, Abdul Sattar Shahid, a TJ spokesman commented that:

> Allies and Morrison have a wonderful background of delivering practical yet inspiring buildings' and that 'we can now look forward to working with people, who like us, want to make a difference to the West Ham Landscape.[147]

The FAQ section denies that any funds for the project will come from the Saudi Royal family and refutes claims that TJ intended the mosque to be a part of the Olympic

[145] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PID=48 (accessed 27/10/2007)
[146] *ibid*
[147] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PID=58 (accessed 27/10/2007)

Games.[148] These FAQs were important because they allowed TJ leaders to interact with questions that had already been posed, and sometimes answered by non-Tablighi parties, allowing leaders to clarify the facts. It was the hope that this page would be used by journalists, politicians and the public as a first port of call when trying to decipher who and what TJ are as well as for the basic facts on the project when reporting.

This desire to reframe the movement as forward thinking and actively engaged in bringing about integration and cohesion to the local area lies in the powerful assertions made by Alan Craig and Newham Concern (NC) that TJ is a "separatist" and "isolationist" sect (Gilliat-Ray and Birt 2010: 146). Unlike TJ, Craig and NC were quick to use modern technologies such as the internet, television and YouTube to forward their arguments. Comparing the two web pages, it is apparent that Craig directly understood the importance of visual aids as a means of supporting claims-making, with NC's website including pictures of Craig with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds something that was lacking on TJ's site. Gilliat-Ray and Birt note that:

> In the early stages of its campaign, the TJ did not see the importance of reaching out directly to build local consensus about how much the project would be geared towards serving the whole community, relying instead on the stated outward-facing and multi-functional nature of the project to carry public opinion without providing further reassurance (Gilliat-Ray and Birt 2010: 146).

This indicates that Tablighi leaders in London were not initially experienced in the planning process nor in information campaigns surrounding their project. This was to change as TJ leaders realised that a concerted effort would be needed if they were to achieve their objective.

[148] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PID=48 (accessed 27/10/2007)

7.3.2: The Importance of YouTube and Public Consultation

Given the context that the London TJ was operating in at the time, a passive reliance on the self explanatory nature of the project was misguided, changing once Indigo took the helms of PR management. In a further break with TJ traditions, Indigo helped movement leaders to establish a YouTube page where key spokesmen could engage with relevant topics in short video sound-bites. The establishment of a YouTube site marks the height of efforts to develop a new strategy focusing on actively engaging with the on going discussions about the project. As with the hiring of PR consultants, this again marks a significant departure from the message presented to grassroots adherents in relatively private meetings held at the Markaz Ilyas, and signals the extent to which TJ leaders may be willing to compromise on their beliefs – or at least their methods.

The YouTube videos highlight the way in which social movements can engage in "framing battles"[149] with their opponents as an attempt to sway the framing process. As part of the attempt to counter the allegations of separatism and isolationism, one of the YouTube videos speaks to the question of who the project will benefit, with the key question being "What is the truth? Will this just be for Tablighi Jamaat Muslims?" TJ spokesman, Abdul Rashid Bhatti responded on the video:

> Absolutely unfounded...the whole thing behind Tablighi Jamaat is to welcome all schools of thought which encompass Islam, so, um, that's definitely not the case and on the other aspect with the non Muslims – we welcome every faith. Every faith is welcome. We provide facilities for people who do not have the same mother tongue as us, to be able to, um, um, participate in the lectures, they'll be given translations. So everybody is welcome, and this really, um, is a bridge between all communities.[150]

[149] This is the process whereby opposing movements engage in battles over self-branding, with each trying to discredit the image of the other and promoting themselves in a specific way – usually trying to resonate with wider cultural significance. See Theoretical Framework.
[150] http://www.youtube.com/user/AbbeymillsMosque#p/u/4/zO1c7ICaUn4 (accessed: 27/04/2009)

By 2008, the London TJ's campaign to demonstrate that they were an active part of the local community was reaching its peak. That movement leaders were now actively engaged in dialogue with the press, the local authority and its opponents, shows the extent of the commitment to making a success of the redevelopment of the site. Faisal Iqbal, another TJ spokesmen stated that TJ was so committed to fully integrating that, 'we want to show that this new mosque can be just as much as part of the community as a football ground' (Izzard 2008). Another TJ spokesman in a YouTube video said:

> 'We are keen to keep people updated on our future plans and how we want to involve people in this exercise. We want to dispel any myths that may have evolved, and ensure that local people are at the heart of what we do'.[151]

It was precisely this desire to put local people at 'the heart of what we do' that led to the staging of a day of public consultation around the proposed plans for the new mosque, with TJ throwing open the gates of the site, inviting local residents to tour existing structures, meet with TJ members and their consultants, as well as the opportunity to ask any questions relating to the development plans.

The weekend of 15 and 16 March 2008 was to be the crowing moment of the London TJ's public and media engagement strategy with the launch of an official weekend of public consultation at the mosque – effectively an open day - where local residents could attend and view the site. As with the other more technological based strategies, this was an attempt to engage directly with local residents and demonstrate that the movement was ticking the boxes of engagement and interaction that the local authority and media were wanting of the movement. In the pamphlet which was supposedly distributed to

[151] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PID=58 (accessed 27/10/2007)

local residents advertising the "open day", mosque spokesman Abdul Sattar Shahid stated:

> We feel it is the right time now to have a meaningful conversation with local people surrounding our site and we believe that the views of the residents of the Newham community are vitally important (Shahid 2008).

Shahid continued in explaining that 'this is a first step in actively engaging local residents in West Ham and the wider community in Newham', reiterating that the project will benefit 'people from all walks of life' (Shahid 2008).

The first main section of the pamphlet is entitled "so what will we be proposing?" and in plain English lists facts surrounding the expected size of the mosque (12,000), the building of a school on the site as well as the landscaping of Islamic gardens that could benefit the wider community (Shahid 2008). The next section of the pamphlet entitled "top ten facts about Abbey Mills Mosque" framed TJ as a modern, tolerant and socially engaged movement that is an integral part of the community. In effect, London TJ leaders had appropriately identified the key issues that were posing setbacks to their project - diagnostic framing (namely the presentation of the movement as a disengaged, insular and intolerant group), and then proceeded to articulate a solution to the problem - prognostic framing (stating that in reality they are open and inclusive and willing to involve the wider community in the plans for the re-development of their site).

TJ leaders through the open day were keen to stress the movement as a 'peaceful and reserved organisation' explaining that traditionally Tablighis 'have been reluctant to engage the media', but given the current context:

> We recognise that communication discussions using written and electronic means have become a necessary part of helping people understand our purpose and ideas (Shahid 2008).

This highlights that TJ leaders have understood that the success of the framing process relies upon the credibility of claims-making – that is that there has to be congruency between a movement's stated beliefs and its actions (Benford and Snow 2000: 619). Through the above comments TJ leaders have tried to pre-empt their opponents assertions that what the movement is now saying does not correlate with how the movement has behaved in the past. What TJ leaders in London tried to say is that despite valuing traditions, there is a willingness to adapt to and accommodate local contexts, even going as far as directly engaging with the media, which Shahid points out was initially 'banned by our founder' (Shahid 2008). The argument is that TJ not be judged by past actions, but rather its newfound desire to engage. Indeed, the pamphlet is so gushing about the desire to engage and be an active part of the community it states:

> We have set ourselves up to be completely open and transparent to local people. We want local people to come and visit us and discuss how the project can integrate fully into the lives of the community. We think Londoners as a whole will welcome this mosque – that's our aim. We want to ensure local people will benefit as well and we need your active participation to help. (Shahid 2008)

On the surface there can be no doubt that London TJ leaders, through the open day, had made the clearest indication of a significant change in the way the movement was to operate. For those who have been studying TJ in London, this shift in the methods of the movement will have come as both a surprise as well as with suspicion. That movement leaders in London claimed that 'the Abbey Mills Mosque will be a symbol of unity and shared belief and place for everyone to enjoy' (Shahid 2008) in light of the situation surrounding the TJ's current HQ mosque in Dewsbury was revelatory. This further indicates that the goal of constructing the new mosque is so important to the movement that TJ leaders have been willing to change their modes of operation in drastic ways.

John Dunne, a reporter for *The London Paper* expressed this sense of surprise at the TJ's change in strategy based on his experiences of trying to gain access to the Abbey Mills site in 2005,

> Having been sent packing twice at the security barrier of Tablighi Jamaat's temporary mosque, I jumped at an invitation to Friday Prayers from a worshipper. Mujahid told me that he was a regular and that Islam was a religion that welcomed everyone. He said he was amazed that I had been turned away, saying that Islam was peaceful and inclusive. "You can definitely get in with me, no problem at all", he said. However, after we took off our shoes, an official started frantically quizzing me about why I was there. Mujahid said I was with him. After a heated exchange Mujahid came back and told me that journalists were under no circumstances permitted. He apologised and disappeared inside while I was ordered to leave the premises (Dunne 2006).

Whilst it is clear that Dunne was expelled from the mosque a number of times between 2005-6, this was during the period before London TJ leaders had turned to embracing the media, and could be explained due to the context of unfavourable media and think-tank coverage around mosques and terrorism (Friedman 2005; Burton and Scott 2008; O'Neill 2009). Another explanation of this is that the TJ at that point was a closed movement and genuinely did not want "outsiders" attending. This provides a clear example of the extent to which the TJ claims to have changed following the hiring of Indigo, progressing from no contact with the media, to actively inviting and encouraging the media on to the site. It is such a dramatic shift in approach in a short space of time that has led to allegations of TJ not making a meaningful transformation, but rather a short term strategic and cosmetic move. As already argued, the goal of constructing the mosque has become so important that movement leaders have been willing to take drastic measures to achieve this. As the new strategy does not correlate with past actions, it will take time and continued efforts on the part of TJ leaders in maintaining their new approach that will eventually change opinions.

For Alan Craig and the opponents of the project, however, the "Open Day" was nothing more than a stunt to gain the favour of the media, and that behind the scenes TJ had not changed. Craig termed the day on one of his own YouTube videos as "the not so open day".[152] Twenty-four hours prior to the Open Day, Craig conducted a door knocking exercise in the immediate proximity of the mosque, and found that many households had not received the pamphlet, nor any information regarding the Open Day. Craig speculated that only a selected audience was invited.[153] Craig was also able to highlight that TJ had not changed in their ways, when on 7 September 2007, TJ representatives failed to attend a public debate in Stratford where local people were to discuss issues surrounding the mosque and over all construction project. Craig commented that:

> "Tablighi Jamaat themselves are refusing to come tonight officially, they're refusing to participate in this open and democratic debate which is what they do!"[154]

The fact that TJ representatives did not attend signalled a lack of credibility to their new claims-making explaining why sustained opposition to the project remained robust.

7.4.1 Opposition to the Tablighi Jamaat

As demonstrated through SMT literature many movements have to deal with opposition. This is especially true when a movement has links to a religious ideology that is seen as threatening by the wider society (Barker 1989). Opposition to TJ is important for this thesis because opposition has necessitated adaptation in the way TJ leaders have developed their strategies to the mosque construction proposals. Previous sections in this

[152] Interview with Alan Craig, Thursday 12 February, 2009
[153] http://www.megamosquenothanks.com/video/no-so-open-day (accessed: 09/05/2011)
[154] Alan Craig, Public Debate over Abbey Mills Mosque plans, Ithaca House, Stratford: London, 7 September, 2007

chapter have argued that TJ leaders in London adapted their strategies after realising the importance of being practical and becoming socialised in the planning processes. This section argues that opposition to the TJ's plans added further pressure on TJ leaders acting as a catalyst in their decision to adapt their strategies. Despite London TJ leaders making an overt effort to reframe the image of the movement, actively engaging with the media, local population and government, opposition to the movement did not recede. Opposition to TJ increased between 2006-2008, with allegations that the movement's efforts to re-frame themselves were merely stunts staged by a PR firm, and that once planned developments were approved, TJ leaders would return to their normal methods. This is a problem that TJ has not been alone in facing but something Islamist initiating change in their methods have experienced (El-Ghobashy 2005; Ashour 2009). This section of the chapter examines opposition to TJ during this period, as well as how TJ leaders tried to mitigate this and how this impacted on the London TJ's stance towards adaptation and engagement.

2006 was a pivotal year in the framing battle between TJ and its opponents. This was the year that the www.megamosquenothanks.com website was established, and which provided a constant ream of information against TJ and its project. The website, still active, includes a background section on TJ portraying the movement as an 'extremist', 'separatist' and 'isolationist' 'sect', arguing that the project will divide the local community.[155] The website includes an up-to-date set of FAQs relating to TJ's development plans, linking in the latest media reports, local authority decisions and any other local, national or international debate pertaining to the project. As well as this, Craig's YouTube videos focusing on various aspects of the mosque including allegations

[155] http://www.megamosquenothanks.com/ (accessed: 9/05/2011)

of terrorism, funding, social cohesion and community impact, are all linked in to the site.[156]

This website managed to tap into the psyche of the nation framing TJ in a way that would stick in the media and the imaginations of the wider public; an image that prompted TJ leaders in London into hiring consultants to help re-brand the movement. The London TJ during 2006 were for the most part on the back foot, reacting to the posts being made on the website, and rarely managing to take the offensive. TJ leaders were initially inexperienced and disinterested in engaging with the issues being raised about the project, instead hoping that keeping quiet and trusting in Allah would allow for the dust to settle. During this period TJ leaders found it difficult to operate in a media savvy context – something they had never done before. Once the decision was made to engage, however, TJ leaders would soon learn to adapt their strategies becoming ever more fluent in what was expected of them.

One of the most significant setbacks TJ received in terms of opposition came in the form of a 2,500 signature petition against its proposed mosque from local Newham Muslims. It was one thing for Alan Craig and the predominantly Christian influenced NC to oppose the "mega-mosque", but different when local Muslims were airing concerns and willing to publicly sign a petition. Justifying the petition, Haras Rafiq, co-founder of the Sufi Muslim Council, commented that 'Muslims in the area are concerned their children will become involved in an extremist ideology' and that TJ as an organisation 'is dangerous' (Haras Rafiq in Dunne 2006). This alliance between some Newham Muslims and NC was to increase the pressure on TJ to abandon their strategy of disengagement and begin the process of transformation.

[156] http://www.megamosquenothanks.com/video (accessed: 9/05/2011)

Whilst many local Muslims did not sign the petition, it is this coming together of a significant proportion of local Muslims in alliance with others who opposed the mosque that gave an extra layer of legitimacy to concerns expressed by NC. The significance of this coming together of Muslims, Christians and other opponents of the project was not lost on Craig, who in November of 2006 issued a press release to that effect. Craig argued that local Muslims and Christians alike were of the same opinion, that TJ 'is an intolerant separatist sect within Islam that is radicalising their young men, sending them off to Pakistani madrassas and causing disharmony' (Craig 2006). Through not responding to such concerns, TJ leaders were allowing themselves to be defined by their opponents and making the proposed construction plans untenable.

The Sunni Friends of Newham were also outspoken with their opinions regarding the project. Asif Shakoor, the leader of the organisation and one of the organisers of the local Muslim petition, commented at the time that TJ discriminates against non-Tablighi Muslims, that TJ 'radicalises the younger generation' and demanded that Muslims take a stand against the project (Asif Shakoor in Al-Alawi and Schwartz 2007). The media drew attention to the then recent petition (Al-Alawi and Schwartz 2007; O'Neill 2006; Barney 2008), although it should be recalled that the Muslim community in Newham is diverse and that many Muslims did not support this petition. As already argued, British Muslim communities are rife with doctrinal and theological disputes pertaining to the practice of Islam as developed on the Indian sub-continent 100 years ago. These disputes are intensified and politicised in the British context, with different Muslim groups opposing others and their projects on the basis of these disputes. This is not to take away from the significance or scale of the Muslim petition, but it is well known that Barelwis and some

other Muslims (often with good historical cause) object to TJ and to any project they may be pursuing.

A smaller London based local newspaper, *Your Local Guardian* also reported on the Muslim petition against the project, commenting that many Muslims in the locality had expressed concern:

> 'The Tablighi Jamaat doesn't represent the main body of Islam…[Tablighi Jamaat] is intolerant towards people of other faiths and other sections of the community (Brown 1996).'

This illustrated that Muslims in Britain are heterogeneous and that many within Muslim communities were opposed to the project. In a further blow to the project, Dr. Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, a prominent Muslim figure in Britain, and co-founder of the Muslim Parliament of Britain commented in London's *Evening Standard* that, 'we have too many mosques. I think it should not be built. What we need first is more integration between the existing mosques and the wider community' (Barney 2008).

Siddiqui was formerly a radical Islamist, a supporter of Maududi and the *fatwa* calling for the death sentence upon Salman Rushdie for his publication of *The Satanic Verses* (Devichand 2005). Today he campaigns for an end to forced marriages amongst British Muslims, is an active member of "Stop the War Coalition" and a commissioner for the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia. Siddiqui, therefore, is seen as being somewhat representative of "mainstream" Muslims in Britain, and due to his prominent position on a number of social and government organisations can ensure that his opinion is heard. Other Muslims and Muslim organisations in Britain echoed his sentiments. The Muslim Public Affairs committee (MPACUK), an anti-zionist organisation seeking to develop British Muslims' political awareness producing 'active and engaged' citizens,

stated that it was against the project because it was not representative of Islam and that it would cause Muslims in Britain more problems than what it was worth. The MPACUK raised some concerns:

> Is there a need for the mega-mosque to be built? Will it allow women on the committee, will members of the committee be democratically elected by those who use the mosque? What will its role be in this climate of Islamophobia? (MPACUK 2008).

These concerns were framed is such a way so as to resonate with the community cohesion agenda and would eventually force TJ leaders into adopting a similar approach. At the same time as local and national Muslim opinion was being expressed, a separate petition from the local Triangle Residents' Association, based next to the Abbey Mills site raised 'fears over extremism and the potential transport chaos when vast numbers of worshippers flock to the area' and that the mosque could have 'significant potential for attracting terrorism' (Dunne 2006). Despite it being unlikely that the local Triangle Residents' Association will have had members with expertise in matters pertaining to extremism and terrorism, the point is that fears being expressed in the press and other outlets will have heightened the situation leading to an atmosphere of fear over the project as well as many local people who know little if anything about TJ believing that a terrorist attack is imminent. Such comments and concerns played directly into an atmosphere of increasing concern and hype about TJ and the spread of radicalisation.

With regards to the way in which social movement campaigns work, the emergence of opposition to TJ's project from a local resident's association signifies the success of Newham Concern's ability to mobilise public support, in effect creating a 'Not In My Back Yard' (NIMBY) movement (Dunn 2001). Although this NIMBY movement was not directly affiliated to Newham Concern, the important point is that Newham

Concern's message was able to inspire and galvanise others to take up opposition in a way in which TJ's campaign was not able to do.

By July 2007 there was a full public and media debate around the issue of the "mega-mosque" climaxing in a 270,000 signature strong petition against the project, posted on the Downing Street e-petitions website.[157] The petition, which was organised by Jill Barham, later to emerge as having close links with the far right British Nationalist Party (BNP) stated that:

> We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to Abolish plans to build a £100 million mega mosque...We, the Christian population of this great country England, would like the proposed plan to build a mega-mosque in east London scrapped. This will only cause terrible violence and suffering and more money should go into the NHS.[158]

Whilst clear that many of the petition's signatories were not members of the BNP, nor indeed knowing of the petition's links to the BNP, the undeniable fact that Barham was so closely linked to the organisation helped mitigate the impact the petition could have had. Interestingly, Craig and many of the NC supporters did not sign the petition, not agreeing with its exclusivist language, instead opting to support a broader local coalition.[159] The damage had been done however, and due to a common misperception that the anti-mosque campaign was a united one, allegations were made of a link between NC, The Christian Peoples Alliance (CPA) and the BNP – an allegation that Craig and his supporters refuted. Even though the allegations were unfounded, the BNP's entry into the debate managed to turn some of the tide of opinion temporarily in favour of TJ.[160]

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[157] www.petitions.number10.gov.uk/ (accessed: 28/03/2010) This, at the time was the largest petition to have been posted on the Downing Street e-petitions website.
[158] http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/ScrapMegaMosque/ (accessed 24/05/2011)
[159] Interview with Alan Craig, Thursday 12 February, 2009
[160] *The Evening Standard* reported that the paper 'has learned that the anti-mosque campaign has been infiltrated by the British National Party, which has told its members to sign the Downing Street petition. The petition was originally posted on the No 10 site by a Right-wing extremist called Jill Barham' (Anon.

The Guardian reported on the size of the petition, but the main story was centred around the petition's links to the BNP (Bunglawala 2007). Whilst the petition was damaging to the TJ's ambitions, the discovered links to the BNP served to turn the focus away from TJ, and as such was not as disastrous as it could have been for them. In Inayat Bunglawala's opinion, the tone of the Barham petition was 'embittered' and buying into existing anti-Muslim discourse (Bunglawala 2007). This demonstrates that no matter how well a campaign is organised, unforeseen developments can serve to alter a context and thus provide opportunities that the 'underdog' can exploit.

TJ leaders in London, now pursuing a strategy of engagement, were quick to seize the window of opportunity in order to mitigate some of the charges against the project. The BNP's involvement encouraged Muslims to stop and reflect on the situation: pressure was put on the leader of the Muslim organised petition, with TJ's website reporting that 'the person who started this petition now supports the plan for the mosque.'[161] TJ leaders in London were able to rely on the support of the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, who entered the debate after it was suggested that public money would be used to pay for the mosque. Livingstone commented that the allegations were 'completely untrue' and reiterated that campaigns of 'false information' 'can damage good community relations':

> The particularly vicious nature of the campaign against a possible Muslim place of worship in East London should be condemned by all of those who support the long established right of religion in this country...[162]

2007).
[161] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PID=48 (accessed 27/10/2007)
[162] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/cache_PID_59.html (accessed 27/10/2007)

This was a two-pronged attack – one on the Barham petition, which claimed that money could be better spent on the NHS insinuating that public money was to be spent on the mosque. The second was on the *Evening Standard's* online poll, which asked whether Londoners wanted the mosque, but in which anyone who wanted to vote could do so and as many times as they wanted to.[163]

The London TJ's website carried a headline article entitled "False Mosque Claims", which reiterated the message that Livingstone had disseminated, and expressed concerns about a malicious campaign that was being waged in order to influence the online poll that the *Evening Standard* had put to its readers.[164] Iqbal Sacranie, former head of the Muslim Council of Britain, in support of TJ, called on Muslims to sign counter petitions to the ones that had been negative to the project, saying that TJ is a peaceful and apolitical group.[165] There was an attempt to place the debate back into perspective, but similar debates over mosques, the place of Islam in society and the belief that multiculturalism had exceeded itself were raging across Europe (Reimann 2007; Huetlin 2006; Spiegel 2006).

7.4.2 Allegations of Terrorism

The final part of this section focuses on the continued allegations of TJ's links to terrorism and radicalisation as a base of opposition to the mosque project, and the extent

[163] Craig also commented on the unfairness of the poll noting that allegations had been made that Muslims in the UK had contacted Muslims in India in order to ask them to vote on the poll.
[164] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PID=52 (accessed 27/10/2007)
The *Evening Standard* poll which is refereed to here is the decision by the Evening Standard to ask their readers to vote on line whether in their opinion the construction of the "mega-mosque" should go ahead. The poll was marred due to a malicious email campaign trying to influence peoples' votes through arguing that the mosque would be bigger than St. Paul's Cathedral, and that public money could be better spent on hospitals – even though no public money had been pledged for the project.
[165] http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1164545880054&pagename=Zone-English-News%2FNWELayout (accessed: 27/03/2008)

to which TJ leaders have tried to engage with and mitigate these concerns. It is important to note from the outset that as an organisation TJ have publicly stipulated that they are a peaceful and apolitical movement, and that violence is not part of their ideology (Jones 2011; Mohammed 2011). As has already been stated, fears surrounding the proposed mosque have been over its potential as a radicalisation point for young men in the community, as well as promoting terrorism in the UK (Friedman 2005; Burton and Scott 2008; O'Neill 2009). This sparked petitions from concerned Muslim leaders in the UK (notably Ifran al Alawi, Ed Hussain and Taj Hargey) as well as from local people in the LBN (Dunne 2006). Whilst such allegations may be based on heightened concerns stemming from the securitisation of Islam, there have also been a number of high profile terrorist events involving individual Tablighi worshippers, which have not helped alleviate the situation.

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, a number of western intelligence services reported that TJ as an international movement could have links to terrorism (Gilliat-Ray and Birt 2010: 147). In 2003, an article appeared in *The New York Times* claiming that since 9/11, the TJ 'has increasingly attracted the interest of federal investigators, cropping up on the margins of at least four high-profile terrorism cases' (Sachs 2003)**.** The article argued that:

> Law enforcement officials say the group has been caught up in such cases because of its global reach and reputation for rejecting such worldly activities as politics, precisely the qualities that are exploited by terror groups like Al Qaeda. 'We have a significant presence of Tablighi Jamaat in the United States, and we have found that Al Qaeda used them for recruiting, now and in the past," said Michael J. Heimbach, the deputy chief of the F.B.I.'s international terrorism section (Sachs 2003).

From the perspective of the French security services:

> Joining the TJ is the first step on the road to extremism. Perhaps 80 percent of the Islamist

> extremists in France come from Tablighi ranks' and has thus prompted French intelligence officers to brand TJ the "antechamber of fundamentalism" (Alexiev 2005).

In 2003, in the context of the UK, this was not regarded as an issue of immediate concern, not least because 7/7 had not yet taken place, London had not yet won the Olympic Bid to host the 2012 Games, and TJ had not yet proposed the construction of what would be the largest mosque in Britain. It was in the context of 7/7 and the continued concern over terrorism that would bring TJ under closer scrutiny. Individuals using the movement's facilities have since been linked to instances of terrorism in Britain and abroad. Specific allegations of acts of terrorism involving those who have attended Tablighi mosques include Richard Reed the shoe bomber, the 2005 7/7 attacks on London, the August 2006 plot to bomb airlines en route from London to the US, and the July 2007 attempted bombings in London and Glasgow (Burton and Scott 2008; Friedman 2005; Doward 2006c; O'Neill 2009). Most recently, documents published by WikiLeaks suggest that individuals have been using TJ as a cover for Al Qaeda operations – something TJ leaders say they do not have any knowledge of, and that as their *jamaats* are open to all Muslims they have no way of knowing the exact background of each participant (Pubby 2011).

Further to this, a report carried out by the Change Institute for the European Union Commission, highlighted further problematic links between TJ and radicalisation:

> Security experts...assess them as potentially dangerous because of the training they organise in Pakistan. This training can be for some Muslims the start of an Islamist or even terrorist career. This assessment is also shared by the interviewed former Tablighi Jamaat member, who argues that the organisation can serve a catalyst function for radicalisation. Others argue that although the Tablighi Jamaat does not formally propagate violence they sometimes articulate some understanding or acceptance of violence that occurs, which might have a catalytic influence on some individuals (Ahmad et al. 2008).

Such allegations, as well as images of individuals linked with TJ appearing in British courts over instances such the airline terror plots have been painful for TJ leaders and still a sensitive issue.

In an unprecedented move Yusuf Suleri, a senior leader at the movement's HQ in Nizamuddin commented:

> I should make it very clear to you, the media and everybody who is interested in knowing our stand on the issue of Al Qaeda, that we neither indulge nor support any kind of violence on the name of Islam or any thing at all. In fact we condemn their doings on the name of Islam...violence which is done by people is unIslamic and the Jamaat condemns it in strongest terms (Yusuf Suleri in Ali 2011).

Suleri continued to argue that any one who thinks TJ condones any form of violence is misguided, instead defining the purpose of the organisation as:

> Here we talk and practice purifying and reforming people of the material/worldly influence. We engage in perfecting *Namaz*, strengthening *Iman*, remembering Allah, treating everybody with compassion and brotherhood and helping people and preparing for the hereafter (Yusuf Suleri in Ali 2011).

TJ leaders in Britain did not want to comment any further than what had been posted on the movement's London website in 2007:

> We do not teach an extremist line, but we clearly can't speak for every single one of those who have ever attended our mosques — there are several thousand people at our weekly gatherings...We utterly refute any links to terrorism or terrorists.[166]

One participant, however, did make an interesting observation – one that I have since heard from other Tablighis:

> Tablighi Jamaat isn't a terrorist organisation just because a handful of people who may have used our mosques at some time in the past may have behaved in an awful way attacking others in the

[166] www.abbeymillsmosque.com/AMILLS/page.php?PID=48 (accessed 27/10/2007)

> name of Islam is unjustified. It would be like saying that just because some people who have gone to Oxford University and have since committed financial fraud that Oxford University should be labelled as a training facility for financial misdemeanours. There's just no logic to it.[167]

Some prominent Muslims in the UK, such as Ifran al Alawi countered this notion of TJ having no links to terrorism. Other Muslim leaders, however, were quick to support TJ. Iqbal Sacranie stated that 'there is not an iota of evidence' that TJ supports Al Qaeda or terrorism.[168] Anas Takriti, founder of the Cordoba Foundation[169] commented that it 'is absolutely ridiculous. Everyone knows that Jamaat Al-Tabligh is peaceful, non-violent and keeping aloof from politics'. Takriti went on to blame the allegations on the 'current climate of fear and rising Islamophobia in Britain.'[170] Yoginder Sikand, was quoted in *The Daily Telegraph* saying that 'fringe elements do not reflect the peaceful spirit of the whole...the group was a very loose organisation' adding that it was 'simply wrong to describe Tablighi Jamaat as a terrorist recruiting organisation' (Johnston and Foster 2007). Further to this, Gilliat-Ray and Birt comment that Faisal Iqbal, a one time spokesman for TJ has commented that if anything, TJ may be viewed as a force for de-radicalisation:

> 'we are moving people away from extremist views. We work with the Special Branch and the Metropolitan Police. If we were preaching something extremist they would be all over us' (Gilliat-Ray and Birt 2010: 147).

[167] Interview with TJ member, Friday 29 October 2011, Newham, London
[168] http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1164545880054&pagename=Zone-English-News%2FNWELayout (accessed: 27/03/2008)
[169] http://www.thecordobafoundation.com/about_us.php (accessed: 11/05/2011) This is an organisation whose stated aim is to 'further dialogue and the culture of peaceful co-existence among cultures, ideas and people'
[170] http://forum.mpacuk.org/showthread.php?t=19568 (accessed: 11/05/2011)

7.5 The Official Perspective: Newham Council and the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation

The goal of this chapter has been to analyse the extent to which the London TJ has undergone a process of transformation between 2005-2010. This section attempts to examine this question from the perspective of the planners at the LBN and London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC). Although attempts by London TJ leaders to frame the public debate in its favour will have been important, the decision making powers as to whether the project can advance rest with the local authority and its partners in local development. Whilst apparent the leaders have mounted a vigorous public relations campaign to prove their commitment to engagement over the planning process, this has not always translated to the actual actions that are expected of the movement at the official level – and ultimately why the LBN decided to take enforcement action against the movement.

Sunil Sahadevan, a senior planning officer at the LBN and chief case-officer on the Abbey Mills project has one of the most informed perspectives on the way the movement's interactions with the Council have developed since TJ acquired the site in 1996. Sahadevan told me that from the Council's perspective, TJ in 1996 were an organisation that had managed to acquire the site through following the due legal process, and that movement leaders at the time were able to demonstrate to the local authority that TJ was a responsible organisation willing to engage with the Council in order to redevelop the site. What perplexed Sahadevan is why TJ have not followed through with that same due legal process, instead opting to illegally erect temporary structures on the site contravening health and safety regulations:

> I can't believe that they don't have professionals amongst their congregation, you know, I mean surely them acquiring the site in the first place took due process, due legal process, and you know, why does it come to an end at that time as soon as they've acquired it why aren't the other requirements followed through?[171]

The discussion with Sahadevan continued to examine the way TJ leaders engaged with the local authority since 1996, and whether the apparent change in strategy since 2007 has been reflected in interactions with the local authority. Sahadevan commented that:

> Its been sort of 2007 that they first got a PR firm on board, I think it was Indigo, prior to that there didn't seem to be that kind of angle at all. In terms of engaging with us and engaging with the community, because when they first moved in, the local residents the businesses around there knew that they didn't have consent, and they were having large festivals which were causing noise and congestion, traffic congestion and this was causing complaints so they probably didn't do themselves a lot of favours in the early stages with their neighbours, and obviously they then started building structures on site. They were made aware that the council wasn't happy, they then did retrospective applications for those structures, but when our members were undertaking site visits prior to those proposals being considered at committee the next day, or the same day, when they were on site they saw other structures being built so there was a recklessness at that stage of trying, to do the right sort of things in terms of the local authority and community because its not just the local authority that are being on the wrong side of, but you have to give consideration to the local community who live at your doorstep and are aware that you are doing things without consent and that obviously causes friction.[172]

Prior to 2007 TJ were not fully engaged with following the due legal methods of the planning process. Information from the movement itself paints a picture of a group stifled by a long and laborious planning process, with younger TJ members taking action into their own hands and building temporary structures (Mohammed 2011). According to Sahadevan this was to start to change:

> But since about 2003 after we had served enforcement notice on some of the structures they had built, and won an appeal, they have since that point become sort of better in terms of not continuing to build things with out consent and also in terms of some of the complaints coming in about noise and congestion that seems to have subsided slightly, so I think you know, they are starting to get that side of things together.[173]

There is an indication then, that the initial failures of TJ to comply with planning regulations may have been due inexperience of the planning process. Sahadevan noted

[171] Interview with Sunil Sahadevan, Planning Officer London Borough of Newham, 1 August, 2010
[172] Interview with Sunil Sahadevan, Planning Officer London Borough of Newham, 1 August, 2010
[173] Interview with Sunil Sahadevan, Planning Officer London Borough of Newham, 1 August, 2010

that since TJ leaders hired Indigo, there has been a greater effort to communicate with the local authority as well as trying to achieve a level of goodwill.[174] This indicates that since TJ started receiving professional advice, they have been learning to adapt to, and negotiate the complex systems of planning, even if by 2010 they had still not fulfilled the expectations of the Council.

As well as the LBN, the other planning body that has taken an active part in decision-making over the proposed construction has been the LTGDC. Peter Minoletti, a senior planning officer there, explained that the LTGDC was set up in 2004 with a lifespan of 10 years, and charged to deal with strategic planning applications within parts of Newham, Tower Hamlets, Barking, Dagenham, Haybury and a very small part of Hackney.[175] There are certain criteria that merit the involvement of the LTGDC, including sites over 1 hectare and buildings over a certain height. Focusing on TJ, Minoletti commented that 'now, our approach is that any meetings which involve Newham planning officers will also involve ourselves'.[176] Minoletti was an employee of the planning department at Newham Council in 1996 when TJ acquired the site, and as such is one of the few planners that has been involved with the project since 1996.

Whilst Minoletti was able to confirm that since 2007 London TJ leaders were making an effort to engage with the media and the local Newham public, he was less sure as to the actual intentions of the movement in the long term. Minoletti said he welcomed TJ's newly found desire to develop a site in accordance with Newham Council's mixed-development desires, although questioned the extent to which the Council's definition of

[174] Interview with Sunil Sahadevan, Planning Officer London Borough of Newham, 1 August, 2010
[175] Interview with Peter Minoletti, Planning Development Manager, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, 24 August, 2010
[176] Interview with Peter Minoletti, Planning Development Manager, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, 24 August, 2010

mixed development tallied with the TJ's – in essence capturing the crux of the debate over the TJ's "transformation":

> I think one of the central issues is that actually how mixed is that, if you were not a member of their mosque or related mosque, how open would that facility be? You know for argument's sake and it sounds a bit obvious, but you know what sort of books will be in the library? If it's purely Islamic reserved books or something or all related to the Qur'an you know, who else might go there? You know what's on offer in the cafeteria? You know those sorts of things. Also a school is an obvious one where you're unlikely to board there unless you're related to the mosque, but there's also been discussion at one stage because the borough wants mixed use for example like residential; if residential is provided on the site who's going to control who lives in there?[177]

Minoletti's point is that it is not enough to say that the proposed facilities will be open to all, rather those facilities must genuinely reflect the dynamics and diversity of the local community. This is something the community cohesion agenda has been particularly concerned with, and will be discussed further in the next chapter. In response to a question over whether TJ's PR strategy was a public face or whether TJ leaders had adapted and were behaving as expected under the planning rules, Minoletti argued that:

> You get the impression that the members of the TJ that attend the official meetings are the ones, basically, who could understand a bit more about some of the arguments coming forward and would say, oh yes we'll look at that or we want to do this, you know, like what you just mentioned, yes we want to have a library, we want to have a cafeteria, you know and then once you prodded them or pushed them a bit you know, how inclusive will this facility be if I just walked off the street how welcoming would I find it you know? Would there be material there that would be of a wider interest? You know, just all those sorts of things. And so, the housing discussion is a real sticking point you know in terms of actually assuming that people would want to live in that location because obviously there are constructions, the railway line and everything else if you created a reasonable residential development who might you be letting to, who might you be selling to?[178]

Whilst these are legitimate concerns, the fact is that in reality controlling these factors will for the most part be out of the hands of TJ leaders. It is the case that some Muslims will want to live next to, or nearby, the mosque more so than others – this will especially be the case if there is an increase in Muslim friendly services such as a library and

[177] Interview with Peter Minoletti, Planning Development Manager, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, 24 August, 2010
[178] Interview with Peter Minoletti, Planning Development Manager, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, 24 August, 2010

school. This relates to the role of the mosque as more than just a place of worship but rather the nexus of Muslim community events, and as such likely to draw in Muslims who want to live near these facilities. That (Tablighi) mosques can alter the demographics of an area can be observed in Dewsbury where the TJ's UK headquarter mosque is based, as well as in the vicinity of the TJ's main Paris mosque. As documented by Kepel:

> Since the inauguration of the Omar mosque, indigenous French shop keepers whose shops are situated on the path of the faithful have been continuously approached to give up their leases. Although some have resisted, the Islamisation of the shops has progressed impressively (Kepel 2000: 192).

Despite the efforts of London TJ leaders to convince planners that they have changed in their modes of operation, an example of TJ's failure to properly understand the way in which the process works in Britain is through a comment made by a senior Tablighi in London to a planning officer. This officer mentioned that TJ own an island as part of the site:

> Which is definitely the most polluted site in the whole of Europe, which just has to be left - you just can't touch it. The horror received a few years ago when they [TJ trustees] said, its alright the women and children can go on that site and I thought WOW![179]

Despite having hired some of the best consultants in London, it still seems the actual journey of transformation for the TJ in London has yet to reach its full conclusion. Of course this is not a process that can be achieved over night and may indeed take a generation or two, but such comments coming from TJ leaders could hamper the reframing of the movement.

[179] Conversation with senior planning officer at LTGDC, 24 August, 2010

One of the most interesting discussions with Minoletti centred around whether the LTGDC had noticed a change in the trustees' engagement with or interaction with planning officials since 2007 –the year London TJ leaders consultants. Minoletti's response was telling of the situation. For Minoletti it was not simply a yes or no response, but that a number of factors had to be taken into account. The way the Trustees were behaving had changed, but at the same time, Minoletti argued that part of the reason for that change was not just out of a desire to change but rather because of the opposition the movement was receiving:

> A reason for them upping it then in a sense was you had a very active local councillor – Alan Craig – who's lost now, but um and you know, that's been one of the interesting things in planning in recent years, the ability of the Internet to generate petitions for or against.[180]

TJ leaders were forced to change their modes of operation as a means of achieving their goals. If the London TJ changed their stance due to opposition, it goes some way in showing they have been adept at realising that past strategies had not been successful and that responding to issues levelled against them was important. As already stated, it is difficult for Islamist movements to change with out it looking as though the change has been due to opportunism as opposed to a genuine and rational desire to change.

What has come as most surprising and difficult to understand for many observers of TJ is the way the London movement had, in 2007, made a dramatic change in their strategy and discourse. Having gone from a movement that was closed and non-engaging to a movement that was attempting a mass PR campaign is intriguing. It is as though TJ leaders came to the realisation that winning the battle over approval for construction was a matter of ticking the right boxes as well as saying what needed to be said. That is

[180] Interview with Peter Minoletti, Planning Development Manager, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, 24 August, 2010

exactly what the London TJ did through Indigo – the public claims that the movement wanted the mosque to be a mixed-use site incorporating a school, a library, a cafeteria, a place for everyone. This marks an important watershed in the movement because through having made these claims, TJ will be held to account and will have to prove that the movement's transformation will be long. This will no doubt have important implications for the longer-term evolution of the movement in London, not to mention a possible impact on the rest of the TJ in Europe and further a field. As will be argued in the next section, the process of engagement is one of the best ways in effecting ideology modification.

If the foray into socio-political engagement proves successful for TJ, and the construction of the mosque is ultimately allowed to proceed and beliefs have not been compromised – or at least if the means justified the end, then it is possible that the wider movement adopt similar strategies in comparable contexts. By the beginning of 2009, however, this strategy of overt engagement had been toned down. It seemed as though the PR campaign had not been the success TJ leaders had wanted, and a re-thinking of strategy needed. Indeed, having attended the mosque during this time, the tensions between whether faith should be placed in a western and secular PR firm, or whether a concentrated effort and 'investment' in the work of Allah should be made as a tried and tested way of success were obvious.[181] Minoletti explained this situation as follows:

> Indigo you might argue was a more definite hic-up, because its quite reasonable that any large building project, if you have a professional team amongst you, you know with designers and planning consultants, taking on a PR firm is a different step. But obviously, as you say, that appears to be a temporary engagement with the west shall we say which they then regret or decided there was no point in continuing with it. I mean its a conundrum really, because as you say you can identify over a year a certain number of public utterances which seem to suggest you know, they are moving to a more collaborative approach and then nothing happens.

[181] See Chapter 6

> Understandably, you know, they've done nothing to improve the conditions on the site itself, as you know yourself.[182]

This statement captures the situation well. It portrays a movement that is caught between engagement and apartism. The attempts of the movement to engage had been too enthusiastic leading to charges of insincerity on behalf of the movement, as well as to TJ leaders questioning whether it was actually a mistake to use new tactics that the movement had avoided in the past. In short the movement had failed to develop a message that resonated amongst the local community in Newham and which was seen to lack congruence between what was said and what was done.

7.6 Putting Engagement into Perspective

Engagement has often been associated with some form of political action, whether voting, trade union membership or writing letters of protest to an MP (Gest 2010: 41). Whilst being "political" is a large part of engagement it is of course not the only element. With regards TJ's mosque project, social and political engagement have come to form a large part of the process that has to be negotiated if there is to be a successful outcome. Engagement is not a one way process and in order to be successful needs two or more parties to actively listen to each other and participate in some form of sustained interaction, with the realisation that at least one may compromise or modify at least some element of their beliefs or objectives. Lucas Swaine in particular has argued that many theocratic communities, due to their very nature will not be familiar with the processes of engagement, and as such liberals have a duty to initiate the process in a considerate way, being 'respectful and fair' instead of 'merely trying to hammer them with doctrines of their own' (Swaine 2006: 136).

[182] Interview with Peter Minoletti, Planning Development Manager, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, 24 August, 2010

For theocratic movements such as the TJ, embarking on the process of engagement often leads to acquiring new skills and becoming ever more familiar and comfortable with the context in which they have to operate. There is a process of learning involved and with learning comes greater confidence in participating according to what is expected. As Corrine Torrekens demonstrated with research on Muslim movements negotiating the political process in Brussels:

> Investment in consultation platforms with municipal authorities...allows leaders to gradually acquire knowledge and social competences relevant to the working of municipal language, procedures and structures...Getting involved in social interactions with municipal authorities provides these new community leaders with an experience of socialisation into collective life and thereby a participatory education in citizenship. Indeed an emphasis on understanding the local political system offers the possibility of learning the skills to engage in critical dialogue about citizenship and integration (Torrekens 2011: 102).

A number of London TJ leaders realised that the process of engagement was vital to the success of the movement's ambitions, not to mention the only way in which they could learn to operate according to the rules instituted by the political establishment in Britain. As seen from chapter 6, the London TJ has been nervous about engaging and this was no exception for the leadership, which was split over the long-term benefits of the strategy. The start stop relationship with media consultants can be seen as evidence of this as can comments from the international *amir* of the movement who commented that the project had got out of hand (Taylor 2009). TJ leaders in London have learned from the process of engagement and are now appearing, at least in London, to operate in a way that is compatible with what is expected of any group proposing a large scale construction project.

The process of engagement initially posed challenges for TJ, a movement that claims to be apolitical – and what Swaine would describe as a retiring theocratic community – that

is those 'who retire from public life and retreat into their religious communities' (Swaine 2006: 137). Several commentators have noted this apolitical nature of TJ[183]:

> A main characteristic of the Tablighi Jamaat movement is that they do not propagate political goals nor do they defend a particular position in political controversies and do not discussion visions of an Islamic state. They restrict themselves strictly to *dawah* work for *the* correct Islamic way of life that follows a literalistic understanding of religion (Ahmad et al. 2008: 78).

Moreover, Ali notes:

> For the TJ life has a single purpose which is to propagate the message of Allah to humanity, not politicking. This is precisely why the TJ rejects political activism and opts for individual preaching and moral reform. It rejects politics for the sake of moral values and principles' (Ali 2006: 223).

For TJ engagement in the political gives rise to a fear of confrontation or heated discussions that could take time and focus away from the more important work of *dawah*, or complicate matters with national governments which often try to restrict movements that have explicit political goals that could be seen as threatening to the state. Despite this, it does not mean that individual Tablighis do not have private political affiliations or opinions (Gaborieau 2006: 61). This chapter has shown that at least for TJ as a movement in London, this complete disavowal of the political has been relaxed, and it is this relaxation that allowed for a process of engagement to begin – a process that could ultimately modify the ideologies of the movement.

[183] So profound is this belief in being apolitical to the TJ that it has been reported that TJ do not even comment on significant current issues affecting Muslims across whether it be the Palestinians, Bosnians or Kashmiris: "Tablighi Jamaat members in an Arab mosque were repeatedly asked to comment on the situation of the Palestinians. When the Tablighi members eventually stated a belief that the Palestinians were being punished by God for not living the Islamic faith correctly, the discussion ended promptly and the Tablighi Jamaat members lost much sympathy and support" (Ahmad et al. 2008: 78).

A distinction needs to be made between a movement that is engaging in a political process out of necessity as a means of furthering its aim to construct its new mosque and a movement, which is engaging in wider political debates (such as the global situation of Muslims), which TJ clearly is not. Whilst the London leadership has had to engage in a process of dialogue and socio-political engagement as a means of furthering the goal of mosque construction, the TJ nevertheless, reminded their followers that political engagement is a dirty business, firmly in the realm of *donya*, and something best avoided where possible. Despite what movement adherents think of the process of engagement, the fact that TJ leaders embarked on the process, albeit in a guarded way, can still have profound effects. In this sense, it is not the policies of multiculturalism or social and community cohesion (which are at best push/pull factors) but rather that TJ leaders have been forced to engage by institutional processes as a means of ensuring the success of their project.

At the gathering on 25 February 2010 at the Markaz Ilyas, the speaker exclaimed that, 'the problems the Muslims face in the world, they bring upon themselves because Muslims have either forgotten or turned away from their mission'. There is a clear recognition here that Muslims across the world do face problems, whether it is in Palestine, Chechnya or Britain. The remedy, however, unlike with groups that follow other interpretations of the *Qu'ran*, is to dedicate more time to becoming better Muslims, namely through increased *dawah*. It is partly through this lens that TJ will have seen the failure thus far to gain permission to construct the mosque. People should not show loyalty to any one political party or government, but rather only to the commands of Allah. Ilyas in his early thought commented that:

> People regarded as loyal supporters of the government are, in fact, not loyal to anyone; they are loyal only to their interests. Since their selfish interests are being satisfied by the present

> government today, they are supporting her. But tomorrow if their interests were to be served by those in opposition, they will start singing their praises and will become equally loyal supporters of theirs...Their real desire is their worship of desires, and so long as this disease remains in them, even if they give up their support for the government, they will become equally loyal to some other powers for satisfying their desires (Ilyas in,No'mani 2001: 36).

This as such is not a rejection of the political, but rather an understanding that the political has the ability to feed the desires of an individual, taking their trust away from the sacred and investing it in the profane. It is this ability of the political to ground people firmly in the profane that TJ are concerned about, and hence the recommendation to remain aloof from political affairs. There is an understanding that political power in itself does not guarantee the correct ordering of society, and that if Muslims as an *ummah* are not fully prepared for that responsibility through a lack of complete submission to Allah, then the experience of that power will more than likely corrupt and destroy. This is a sentiment that has been expressed by a leading member of TJ in Australia:

> Politics is a game and a dirty game at that. No matter how clean you play, inevitably principles, values and morals get compromised. The fact of the matter is that politics corrupt your mind and your soul. Those in politics only strive for power and not for Islam. Power is bad politics because people in politics are even prepared to sell Islam to achieve it (TJ leader in, Ali 2006: 257).

It cannot be denied, however, that TJ have what Gaborieau has termed a 'vision of the political future of the Muslim community' (Gaborieau 2006: 62). Having said this, political power and political engagement in order to further one's objectives is not necessarily a bad thing for TJ; it just has to be achieved and executed in the correct manner.

This view of politics is particularly clear in the work of Zakariyya Kandhalawi. In response to a written question from one of his students on whether Muslims should be politically engaged, Zakariyya responded:

> To those whom Allah has granted bravery and courage, and who are able and capable, having the necessary time, should definitely spend it in religious as well as political affairs for the general welfare of the Muslims (Kandhlawi 2001: 36).

The point here is that political engagement may be an option those few people who have the abilities and strength to engage with the profane, but only in so far as that engagement furthers the cause of the Muslims. In this sense, political engagement may even be viewed as a form of *jihad* that is of benefit to the *ummah*. Indeed, in a later letter written to one of his students Zakariyya reasons that:

> Certainly they [those who are not directly involved in special religious affairs] should take part in politics but with sincere motives and with a clear conscience with which they can appear before Allah tomorrow. Such should be their deeds that it can be written in their favour as deeds of righteousness. To strive for the welfare of the Muslims is a form of Jihad. Jihad is a most important part of the deen. For this reason anything which serves to raise the word of Allah is beneficial and necessary (Kandhlawi 2001: 45).

Although such a view was not expressed at the Thursday evening talks, all Tablighis interviewed as part of this research spoke highly of Zakariyya, commenting that all of his writings were 'important', 'mandatory' or 'obligatory' reading for them. The leaders of the movement are aware of the views expressed by Zakariyya, with his views of the political influencing them in their approach and responses to the mosque construction process. Leaders of the TJ in London viewed the process of engagement between 2005 and 2010 as a "necessary evil". Necessary because without it negotiations over mosque construction would never progress, and evil because such engagement has the power to corrupt and take valuable time away from the work of re-orientating people towards the faith.

This chapter has charted the London TJ's process of transformation in the 2005-2010 period. The chapter demonstrates that London TJ leaders decided to adapt their strategies as a means of ensuring a positive outcome for their mosque construction process. The

sustained level of opposition around the London TJ's project intensified the level of pressure on movement leaders helping them realise that a practical approach to the planning process was necessary. TJ leaders hired consultants and started to utilise tactics that had been alien to the movement in the past such as using media communications and inviting the public on to their site. The period however was still characterised by a certain level of inexperience on behalf of TJ leaders in negotiating the planning process and continued contestation of the project. Chapter 8 will focus on the way London TJ leaders built upon their 2005-10 experiences in order to publicly defend their position at a public Inquiry and ultimately advance the construction of their new mosque.

8. The Public Inquiry into Enforcement Action at the Abbey Mills Riverine Centre

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is a case study demonstrating how London TJ leaders and activists applied what they learned between 2005-2010, in order to convince a Planning Inspector that they have transformed their modes of operation, and are now an organisation that can be trusted with an iconic project. The chapter demonstrates that through having to engage, TJ leaders in London have started to learn what is expected of them, as well as how to demonstrate commitment to change in a practical way. Initially this process of adaptation ignited discussions over the extent to which TJ have made a *genuine* change to their modes of operation, often down to (perceived) lack of congruency between what the London TJ have said, and the way they (and the wider movement in Britain) have acted. In short TJ have been caught in the juxtaposition between adapting to playing by the rules of a liberal, secular state and the belief that the only actual way to achieve one's goals is through living an authentic way of life (according to the tenants of Tabligh). This chapter uses the Public Inquiry over Enforcement Action on TJ's site as a means of analysing the extent to which the London TJ managed to convince decision makers and bystanders that they have made a long-lasting change to the way the movement in London operates.

The chapter divides its argument into five sections. The first presents a brief background to the Inquiry, providing a history of how it came to take place as well as an analysis of the 'Notice of Enforcement'. Documents pertaining to planning regulations will be outlined and an emphasis placed on policy aspects relating to social and community cohesion. The importance of this is that all three players within the Inquiry stressed the importance of this issue. The issue of community cohesion has been the one that ignited

most interest from the media and general public, and has been a matter TJ leaders have sought to engage with through their public consultation literature. This will set the context of the chapter allowing for an informed analysis of the events as they took place as well their wider significance.

The second section presents the case for enforcement action against the London TJ's site from the perspective of the LBN. In short the perception was that the London TJ had not gone far enough in changing their modes of operation, failing to follow due planning processes. The third section examines the London TJ's response to the Council, demonstrating that they have actively sought to engage with critical issues and that as a movement, are committed to developing their site in accordance with the rules and regulations in a timely and consultative way. The fourth section analyses evidence submitted to the Inquiry by Newham Concern (NC), expressing that TJ are a 'separatist sect' which pose a fundamental challenge to the social and community cohesion of London and Britain as a whole (Pugh-Smith and Deakin 2011). NC's belief is that TJ as a movement have not and cannot make a genuine transformation, and should not be trusted with building such a large mosque. The final section, through discussing the outcome of the Inquiry, argues that despite the level of opposition to TJ's project, the Inspector deemed that the movement had done enough to signal that they are a practical organisation, one that business can be done with.

8.2 Background to the Inquiry

8.2.1 History

On Tuesday 8 February 2011, the Public Inquiry into the Appeal over Enforcement Action of the Abbey Mills Riverine Centre by TJ opened at the LBN's Town Hall in East Ham. The Inquiry took place over 10 days, with the Planning Inspector Graham Dudley delivering his verdict on 23 May 2011. The outcome of this Inquiry did not determine whether or not the proposed mosque can be built, but rather whether TJ will have leave to remain on their current site for an extended two years – in which time a masterplan for the site will be submitted (Jones 2011). Even though this Inquiry, in its strictest sense, was to determine whether use of the current facility should be extended for a further two years, all three parties involved (TJ and its team, the London Borough of Newham and NC), were to treat it as though it were determining the final outcome of the project. In doing so, issues around the nature of TJ, as well as matters of social and community cohesion, at times over shadowed discussions over practicalities such as traffic and noise concerns. It was for the Inspector to remain aloof from politicking and to make a decision based on the case at hand.

The LBN issued the Notice of Enforcement affecting facilities on the Abbey Mills site on 21 January 2010. The six-page document comments that the main reason for Enforcement Action is that, 'it appears that there has been a breach of planning control' (LBN 2010: 1). The document outlines a myriad of specific breaches in planning regulations on the site including:

> Without planning permission, the change of use of land and all buildings outlined in red on the attached map as a place of worship, the erection of various buildings and extensions...and the establishment of a hard standing as a car park...(LBN 2010: 1).

TJ had been using buildings on the site illegally since the authorisation of temporary structures ceased in 2006. Ultimately the Council did not believe that the London TJ had made enough of a transition to make it an effective partner in the regeneration of the site, nor was TJ likely to do so in the near future. The document instructed the Trustees they were to, 'cease the use of land and all buildings as a place of worship' (LBN 2010), effectively meaning the closure of the current 'temporary' mosque on the site. The Notice was to take effect form 4th March 2010, 'unless an appeal is made against it beforehand' (LBN 2010). An appeal was made with the eventual result being the commencement of a Public Inquiry.

Despite the Council having clear reasons for the Notice of Enforcement, there also appears to be consensus in Newham that the Enforcement, whilst valid, came at an opportune time. In a conversation with Solad Mohammed, a senior London TJ leader, he told me that because General and Local Elections were looming at the time, the Labour Party (in control of Newham Council at the time) did not want to lose any of its seats and as a consequence took action over the mosque. Labour did not want to be seen as soft on Muslims, fearing that the BNP, which was predicted to do well in the neighbouring borough of Barking and Dagenham would stir the situation in Newham (Quarmby 2010). Given that the Council had not taken any significant action in the past 14 years covering the period of the breaches in planning regulations, Mohammed could see no other reason for the timing of the Enforcement – "this has all come down to political reasons".[184]

[184] Conversation with Mr. Solad Mohammed (Trustee of the Anjuman-E-Islahul-Muslimeen of London, UK), 9/02/2011

Alan Craig, former Leader of the Opposition on Newham Council, also commented that whilst he felt enforcement was justified, the timing of the action was political, given that the Christian Peoples Alliance (CPA) of which he was leader, was expected to perform well in a number of wards across the borough.[185] With the Council taking what appeared to be tough and public action over the mosque, the CPA were left with no seats on the Council and Labour a 100 per cent victory (Hill 2010). Despite this consensus amongst some of the actors involved in the Inquiry, the LBN's *Statement of Case* outlines a process whereby the mosque Trustees were given numerous warnings about deadlines over submission of a masterplan, and that it was a continued failure to submit one that ultimately resulted in action being taken. The *Statement of Case* states that TJ were informed of this in a meeting in 2009 and had over six months to comply with the local authority's request to submit a masterplan that had then been due since the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between TJ and the LBN in 2001 (Hegarty and Sahadevan 2010: 10-11).

The Public Inquiry was originally to be heard as an Informal Hearing. This captures the fact that the main issue was the appeal against the Council's decision, and for TJ leaders to request that the Inspector consider a two-year extension on the facility. TJ's project, however, by this time had gained so much symbolic value with much at stake on all sides, that the Council and NC wanted the Hearing upgraded to a Public Inquiry. The official reasons for this were communicated in a letter to the Planning Inspectorate from LBN on 22 April 2010:

> The Council have sought consultation responses from a large number of agencies, government organisations and internal services concerning this deemed application and as such it is expected that a number of these will wish to be heard by the Inspector. The Council will also be seeking to

[185] Conversation with Alan Craig (Newham Concern and former Leader of the Opposition on Newham Council), 9/02/2011

> notify residents that reside approximately half a mile from the mosque...With the projected public interest in this appeal and the prospect of large numbers wanting to both attend and participate in this appeal, providing third party comment, it is considered that a Hearing forum is not appropriate in this instance...this Council would strongly request that this appeal is changed to a Public Inquiry' (Hegarty 2010).

The LBN wanted the process around the appeal to be much broader than an Informal Hearing. A formal Public Inquiry would allow for a greater number of bodies, both public and otherwise to contribute to the proceedings, elevating the matter to greater public scrutiny and transparency.

8.2.2 Policies Relating to Planning and Community Cohesion

The attacks on 7 July 2005 in London had a transformative effect on government policy towards Muslim Communities. Multicultural ideals were temporarily abandoned in favour of policies relating to community cohesion, and it is this that has coloured the London TJ's attempts at redeveloping their site. What has been of interest throughout the proceedings surrounding the proposed construction of the Markaz Ilyas are the continued references to policies surrounding cohesion. All the relevant parties at the Inquiry took up this aspect, although in different ways. From the point of view of the LBN, the motivation was that any new development in the borough should comply with planning regulations as well as the recent additions pertaining to community cohesion. Based on these regulations the Council stressed that the only acceptable form of redevelopment on the Tablighis site was that of a mixed-use development. That is a site that includes a mosque as part of the wider development, but must include other aspects such as accommodation or retail units and conference space that can be used members of the wider community.

For NC, the issue is that the nature of TJ does not lend itself to community cohesion, that TJ is a separatist and fundamentalist organisation intent on Islamising the area, and not engaging with the community (Craig 2011a). NC stressed the importance of applying the rules, regulations and policies around social and community cohesion to TJ, with the belief that the evidence will speak for itself – "you only need look at the current headquarters of TJ in Dewsbury to see that it has been detrimental to cohesion".[186] The final (and perhaps most important) actors were TJ. TJ representatives throughout the Inquiry stated that the movement is deeply concerned with community cohesion, that TJ provides a service to a large segment of a minority community, and should be regarded as an important part of the current cohesion of the Newham community.[187]

By the end of 2005, social and community cohesion became buzzwords with central government, and with local authorities becoming fixated on ways in which cohesion could be enhanced. A report by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) notes:

> Community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another (DCLG 2010: 8).

It is these twin issues of 'cohesion' and 'integration' that have come to be fundamental to many of the arguments used at the Inquiry. One of the first documents alluding to cohesion and which all parties at the Inquiry cited was 'Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development' (PPS1). This dossier, released by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005, 'provides guidance towards achieving sustainable

[186] Conversation with Alan Craig (Head of Newham Concern), 16/02/2011
[187] Examination of Mr. Solad Mohammed (Trustee of the Anjuman-E-Islahul-Muslimeen of London, UK), by Russell Harris QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, morning session.

development via a variety of techniques including community involvement' (Hegarty and Sahadevan 2010: 14). The LBN uses PPS1 as a 'guiding document when drafting Councils' planning documents, as well as determining planning application' (Hegarty and Sahadevan 2010: 14). PPS1 is of particular relevance because it has the following points pertaining to community cohesion that have been applied to TJ's project:

- 5. Planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by...ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, livable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and services for all members of the community (ODPM 2005: 3).

- 13 (v). Development plans should also contain clear, comprehensive and inclusive access policies – in terms of both location and external physical access. Such policies should consider people's diverse needs and aim to break down unnecessary barriers and exclusions in a manner that benefits the entire community (ODPM 2005: 6)

- 16. Development plans should promote development that creates socially inclusive communities, including sustainable mixes of housing. Plan policies should:
    - ensure that the impact of development on the social fabric of communities is considered and taken into account;
    - seek to reduce social inequalities
    - address accessibility for all members of the community to jobs, health, housing, education, shops, leisure and community facilities;
    - take into account the needs of all the community, including particular requirements relating to age, sex, ethnic background, religion, disability or income...(ODPM 2005: 7)

- 27. In preparing development plans, planning authorities should seek to:
    ii. ...policies should promote mixed use developments for locations that allow the creation of linkages between different uses and can thereby create more vibrant places.
    iii. Promote communities which are inclusive, healthy, safe and crime free, whilst respecting the diverse needs of communities and the special needs of particular sectors of the community. (ODPM 2005: 11)

Whilst the document tries to lay down ground rules regarding new construction projects, the problem is that these regulations can be interpreted in different ways. If one takes point 5 (above), both TJ and NC have used the point in their own favour; NC arguing that TJ are not 'inclusive' nor do they facilitate 'mixed communities', and the TJ, that they are part of the equation that makes the community inclusive and 'mixed'. The same sentiments may be applied to the LBN's *Sustainable Community Strategy,* which highlights the need to 'meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents' and that communities are 'safe and inclusive...and offer equality of opportunity for all' (LBN

2008: 6). This raises the difficulty for a group such as TJ in treading the fine line of furthering a construction project, whilst following an ideology that is perceived by the majority of the wider society (including many "mainstream" Muslims), as separatist and out of tune with modern Britain.[188]

8.3. The Council's Case: Enforcement Action

Presented from the perspective of planning officials involved with the Abbey Mills site, this section focuses on allegations that TJ in London have consistently breached planning regulations, failed to adequately engage with the Council's planning processes, and that TJ leaders themselves have been a significant factor in delaying the regeneration of the local area. The importance of these assertions are that they reveal TJ as not yet having fully achieved its process of transformation in London, nor acquired the ability to function within the parameters of the state. These claims are of importance because London TJ leaders have framed themselves as having done everything within their power to abide by regulations, and feel that it is the local authority that have hampered the plans for the regeneration of the site. This returns to the dispute over whether TJ has been able to present itself as a movement committed to socio-political engagement and community partnership, but more importantly also act in this way.

In the *Statement of Case* issued by the LBN, there are a number of case studies pertaining to the use of the Abbey Mills site that highlight TJ as non-compliant with planning regulations, as well as being counter to the cohesion of the local community:

[188] This element of cohesion is also highlighted in the *London Plan*, that is the plan put forward by the Mayor's office and which regulates development in the capital. Policy 4B.5 of this document calls for 'creating an inclusive environment', that all new developments can be 'used safely, easily and with dignity by all regardless of disability, age, gender, ethnicity or financial circumstances' (London 2004: 249-50).

> For the continued period of time the unauthorised use [of the site] has been in situ and the continuation of that use into the future will have a detrimental impact on strategic regeneration objectives for the Council, the LTGDC and the Olympic Delivery Authority (Hegarty and Sahadevan 2010: 28).

The LBN further raised the issue that the site is:

> Heavily contaminated, with a lack of certainty over what remediation of the site has been undertaken, and whether this is satisfactory in not presenting health and safety implications for occupiers and other users (Hegarty and Sahadevan 2010: 35) (Waterman-Environmental 2007; Environment-Agency 2010; Crowcroft 2011).

TJ leaders, despite having known since the acquisition of the site, that it is one of the most contaminated in the whole of London, have not taken the adequate health and safety precautions expected of them. Indeed, one senior planning officer said that when the issue of the "highly contaminated Channelsea island", (that is a part belonging to the site) was raised with TJ Trustees, their response was that it should be adequate for women worshipers.[189]

It is such comments that provide ammunition to those who characterise TJ as a backward group counter to the standards of equality valued in British society. Further to this, the *Statement of Case* explains that:

> Adequate time has been given to the Trust to achieve acceptable redevelopment of the property or an alternative site for worship. The Council has warned the Trust on multiple occasions that the current development is unacceptable and that more appropriate redevelopment of the property was necessary (Hegarty and Sahadevan 2010: 41).

[189] Interview with a senior planning officer, July 2010

Sahadevan when under examination by Douglas Edwards QC, stated that in all his time as a planning officer for LBN, had "never seen a masterplan".[190] This portrayal of TJ has been negative, raising questions over the extent to which TJ have changed - an accusation that TJ leaders in London worked hard to combat.

At some level, the Inquiry came down to the question of whether TJ are a suitable group to construct Britain's largest Mosque. From a planning perspective this does not specifically raise questions over the religious affiliation of TJ, but rather the same core competencies that are required of any other group in the same position. That is the ability to properly function and provide the correct responses within the planning system – whether that system is alien to them or not. Initially London TJ leaders found this challenging because they had not had previous experience with the planning processes, nor did they believe that they were accountable to the same laws as others. This difficulty in functioning within the system was highlighted by Sahadevan, who noted that throughout the 14 year period that the Trust owned the site, despite repeated promises for submission of a masterplan for the site, only one was submitted in 2003 and that this did not meet the specified requirements stipulated by the LBN (Sahadevan 2011a: 13). There were reports that TJ had not paid their hired professionals and that the eventual submission was deemed invalid (Sahadevan 2011a). Indeed, the problem with the application had been the desire to develop 'a homogenous religious use of the site, which the Appellants knew would be unacceptable to the Council' (Sahadevan 2011a: 13).

[190] Examination of Mr. Sunil Sahadevan (Planning Officer LBN), by Douglas Edwards QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 18/02/2011, morning session.

A homogenous religious use of the site was contrary to *the Memorandum of Agreement* that TJ leaders signed with the LBN in 2001 (LBN 2001). TJ leaders wanted to develop their site in accordance to their own specifications, not wanting to pursue mixed-use of the site, opting for a development that would include a large mosque and Islamic boarding school. Sahadevan noted that until about 2005, rather than hiring professional advisers to help them manoeuvre through the application process, TJ's consultants were members of the 'Trust's own congregation, and that they did not have any previous significant Master planning experience' (Sahadevan 2011a: 17). This demonstrates that in many cases groups that have not had previous planning experience may be naive as to the way the system works. As demonstrated in Chapter 7, this further shows that the process of engagement provides a platform for such movements, socialising them into what is expected of them and giving them opportunities from which to operate and modify their behaviour. That engagement can have a transformative effect on a movement was demonstrated by TJ at the Inquiry, and will be further discussed below.

By 2009 the London TJ's Trustees attended a meeting with officials of the LBN and were advised that: 'unless meaningful progress was made on the masterplan by the end of the year, the Council would be forced to pursue enforcement action' (Sahadevan 2011a: 19). Sahadevan reiterated this when questioned by Russell Harris QC, commenting that the LBN "wanted to be reasonable and cooperate with the Trust", and that the Trust had been given numerous warnings regarding their 'illegal use of the site'.[191] Despite these warnings according to Sahadevan, the Trustees did not approach the Council for any

[191] Cross-examination of Mr. Sunil Sahadevan (Planning Officer LBN), by Russell Harris QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 18/02/2011, morning session.

further meetings or consultations, nor did they contact any of the Council's statutory partners –the LTGDC, the ODA or the GLA.

By the end of 2010, Karen Jones, chief consultant for the Trustees, contacted the LBN requesting a meeting to 'try and convince the Council why a single religious use of the site would be acceptable to the Council' (Sahadevan 2011a: 21). This was a last attempt by TJ leaders to develop the site in accordance with the movement's actual desires, although this view changed to an acceptance of a mixed-use development at the Inquiry. Sahadevan questioned the robustness of TJ's change to a mixed-use development in such a short time span, as well as raising doubts based on the history of the Trustees' interactions with the LBN, whether the Trustees would be able to deliver on this promise.[192] For TJ leaders in London, however, the shift in their position marked an attempt to show that through having engaged with the LBN throughout the Inquiry, they now understood what was expected of them, and were ready to comply. This was to demonstrate in a public arena that TJ are able to make compromises in order to reach equitable outcomes.

Sahadevan concluded his evidence reiterating the Council's view of TJ:

> 1) The Trust have been given every opportunity to come forward with a policy compliant Masterplan but have repeatedly failed to take these opportunities in spite of many occasions when they expressed intention to do so.
> 2) The Appellants in reality seem committed to a faith based use on the site which would not be policy compliant.
> 3) Therefore the Council has no confidence that the Appellants will come forward with a policy compliant Masterplan which is acceptable to the Council now or in the future (Sahadevan 2011a: 22).

[192] Ibid.

For the LBN, TJ had not adequately engaged with the planning process, and where TJ had engaged, it had not had a transformative effect on the movement. According to the LBN, despite numerous meetings with TJ, its leaders still wanted to pursue a redevelopment plan that would have a homogenously religious use of the site. It was not until the Public Inquiry where TJ were forced to either accept a mixed-use development or face enforcement action that TJ leaders decided to pursue a practical agenda, accepting that the site could not be developed solely for religious purposes. There was a breakdown in trust between TJ and the LBN, with the LBN viewing TJ as having a double agenda. Based on the history of interaction with the movement the LBN were fearful that a masterplan for redevelopment of the site would never come to fruition. Despite this, Russell Harris QC, informed the Planning Inspector, that just days before the Inquiry had started, the Council had entered into a PPA[193] with TJ for the redevelopment of the site, thus apparently undermining the case of the Council.

8.4 The TJ Responds

8.4.1: Solad Mohammed

First to be called to the stand on the side of the Appellants was Solad Sakandar Mohammed a senior member of the Anjuman-e-Islahul Muslimeen (TJ in London). Mohammed confirmed that he had been a member since he was a teenager in the 1970s and that he was closely involved with the "management of the Riverine Centre since its

[193] A PPA is a Planning Performance Agreement and is agreed between the different parties involved in the submission of a masterplan. The agreement sets out a framework for guiding the application from initial pre-application submission, all the way through to issuing the decision notice. The PPA agrees key tenants of the development proposals, including nature and scope. This process costs around £56,000.

acquisition".[194] Mohammed, from the start of his examination, pointed to his written submission to the Inquiry, commenting that TJ's main objective is to:

> Welcome people into our community so they can learn more about our faith, prayers, fellowship, sincerity in our deeds and betterment of our character...It is our belief that a good Muslim is one with whom the person next to you feels safe. This is the ethos with drives our relationship with our neighbours and the wider community (Mohammed 2011: 4).

That Mohammed chose to begin through stressing TJ's role as a good neighbour shows the extent to which the Trustees viewed cohesion as amongst the most important elements of the Inquiry. Through referring to TJ's faith element and then linking this with cohesion demonstrates TJ leaders' awareness of the need to frame the movement as having achieved a balance between religion and politics, personal convictions and abiding by the norms of society. The goal of this was to portray TJ as a modern "in touch" movement, showing that through having engaged, leaders now knew what was expected of them and that they were committed to pursing this. It signals TJ leaders' ability to identify critical themes and a willingness to deploy these in a way resonating with the Inspector, irrespective of TJ leaders own views on the matter. It is at such instances that TJ leaders have demonstrated that they have understood the planning system as well as the sophistication to interact with it.

Rather than directly engaging with the planning issues at hand, Mohammed in his *Statement of Proof* decided to turn to the proposed construction of the new mosque, arguing that the current site is not adequate for purpose. A typical attendance on a Thursday evening (the mosque's busiest period), is 'between 1,500 – 1,900 people' with the numbers growing thus facilitating the need for a larger and purpose built place of

[194] Examination of Mr. Solad Mohammed (Trustee of the Anjuman-E-Islahul-Muslimeen of London, UK), by Russell Harris QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, morning session.

worship (Mohammed 2011: 8)[195]. Mohammed moreover stated that the success of the London TJ has been in its 'apolitical message of peace...the success of the Centre is testimony to the power of this message' (Mohammed 2011: 8). This exemplifies the sort of claim that TJ leaders have made in public in order to re-frame TJ as a movement with which business can be done. Whilst it is generally true that the London TJ's success has been its framing as an apolitical and peaceful movement, it is more importantly because it has managed to stay faithful to its principles, distancing itself from socio-political engagement, and providing a familiar space for its members to operate in. It will be interesting to observe whether the decision to change the movement's strategy to one of greater engagement with the wider society will have ramifications on membership numbers and whether leaders will struggle to justify the new approach with traditional teachings.

In a continuation of the cohesion theme, Mohammed asserted his belief that the TJ's London site is a central aspect of the local community, and that enforcement action would have a negative impact. In addition to the mosque's role as a place of worship, it also serves as a place of 'faith studies, practical studies (application of holy teachings to modern life skills), occasional weddings, counselling services and eating facilities' (Mohammed 2011: 11). Having ensured that the Inspector and others at the Inquiry knew that the mosque is more than just a place of worship, Mohammed continued in outlining the implications of enforcement action: If the Appeal is unsuccessful, and the Centre is 'forced to cease use, the impact on the participants will be long-lasting, dramatic and distressing' (Mohammed 2011: 13). This again highlights that TJ leaders were able to

[195] From my own observations I would place the average Thursday evening attendance figures at over 2000 worshippers.

learn from their initial period of engagement in 2005-10, applying information relevant to the planning process in order to advance their project.

The point was made that between 50-60 % of all regular participants in the Centre's activities are from 'the local area', that the facility is used by people from '42 different nationalities, all of whom trust the Centre to be there for them' and that 'no other Centre has the strength of diversity that the Centre offers' (Mohammed 2011). This countered the framing of TJ as a homogenous and closed group, rather presenting them as diverse, open and multicultural, actively engaged with many different (albeit Muslim) sectors of the community. The argument resonated with policies of social and community cohesion, reinforcing that the facility is not just for the few, but open to vast segments of the local population. TJ leaders in London have managed to gather and use facts in order to present themselves as being well informed, and able to engage to the level that is expected in a Public Inquiry. This exemplifies that the process of engagement has had a transformative effect on the way the movement operates irrespective of whether the new strategy is genuine or not. The point is that TJ leaders have been able to put personal convictions to one side, highlighting information relevant to the planning process and showing an understanding of wider contextual factors as a means of advancing their objectives.

TJ leaders and their team claim that every effort is now being made to show that the London movement will do everything within its power to cooperate and engage with the local authority, demonstrating how important the current use of the site is to the continued existence of the community. The rationale for them is that TJ is just as much a part of the community as is any other group, and as such should have the right to

continue practicing their faith in the local area, albeit recognising that a more sincere approach to engagement is necessary. Harris speaking on behalf of TJ suggested that the threat to the existence of the community [TJ] has forced the community [TJ] to reassess their position – the fear of the Appeal failing "has concentrated their minds".[196] This comes as a guarded admission that TJ have had short fallings in the past but now realise that there is a process to be followed, and have publicly acknowledged and committed to this.

This is a theme that Karen Jones also noted in her verbal evidence commenting that, "the threat of losing this [appeal] is enormous and they [TJ] will do everything to work with the Council to get a facility that is best for both parties" - that is a new facility for TJ and genuine regeneration for the Council.[197] It is the realisation of this fear that Mohammed played upon, commenting that:

> If the Centre was forced to close, it would be very difficult to restart it again' and that 'the success of the Tablighi Jamaat is largely this notion of single geographical Centres...a single Centre helps the community channel all its energy, spirit and resources into one place (Mohammed 2011: 14-15).

This fear of the community disbanding if the centre was closed shows that TJ leaders were eager to convince the Inspector, that should this happen, a vital element of a diverse community could be lost, thus playing the Council at their own game.

Expanding upon this, and again focusing on the theme of community, TJ leaders emphasised that even though the wider society may have a negative image of TJ, their

[196] Mr Russell Harris QC, Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 18/02/2011, morning session
[197] Examination of Miss Karen Jones (Consultant, Cushman and Wakefield), by Russell Harris QC, Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, afternoon session

message is of benefit to everyone. A message that 'encourages people to take responsibility of their own lives', and when combined with faith 'unites people' (Mohammed 2011: 16). In support of this, a letter to the Inquiry by Lord Patel of Blackburn was referred to:

> The facilities and services being provided by the Tablighi Jamaat are of benefit to the community and the wider values of understanding and tolerance. The Centre provides a forum for the community to discuss their values, to teach from experience, to learn from other cultures and spread the message of peace which is at the heart of the teachings of Tablighi Jamaat (Patel 2010).

This furthered the point Mohammed was making whilst at the same time adding the gravitas of a member of the House of Lords. Patel emphasised that to uphold the enforcement action 'would be to surrender to those that seek to promote confusion, ignorance and intolerance in our society' as well as having 'disastrous short term consequences' (Patel 2010). The reference to those seeking to 'promote confusion' can be seen as a cloaked attack on NC, whilst the reference to disastrous consequences left a strong impact as to the effect of enforcement action.

Mohammed explicitly stated that the Trustees were now of the firm resolution that any new development would be a "mixed-use site" and would "incorporate a school, community facilities, and retail units".[198] There has further been an effort on the part of TJ to work against a drug culture in the wider community. Mohammed signalled that TJ are 'regularly in touch with parents who ask us to help their children and save them from falling into problems with crime, drugs or being manipulated by others and straying from the right path' (Mohammed 2011: 16). Mohammed outlined that this active community role was recognised by the Ministry of Justice, who use the Centre as a place where

[198] Cross-examination of Mr. Solad Mohammed (Trustee of the Anjuman-E-Islahul-Muslimeen of London, UK), by Douglas Edwards QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, morning session.

people serve community service. A letter from the London Probation Trust was submitted to the Inquiry commenting that the Abbey Mills site has been used as a place of community service since August 2010, and that the use of the facility was of benefit to those serving out their sentence (Goud 2010). If the site was to close, according to TJ's team, 'there is a significant risk that these younger members of the community would be lost and would revert to anti-social behaviour' (Mohammed 2011: 16). There could be no stronger signal of TJ's active engagement with the wider community, even if this only started in 2010.

In the final part of his *Proof of Evidence*, Mohammed noted that as a result of cuts announced by the Coalition Government, the Council is facing a cut of 10.5% in its annual budget and as a result 'it is the poorer members of the community who will suffer' (Mohammed 2011: 18). TJ Trustees have positioned the Centre as one that will have:

> A fundamental role to play in the next few years, both in helping people during the difficult financial times ahead whilst also providing a community facility that will compensate to some extent the other facilities that may be forced to close in other parts of Newham (Mohammed 2011: 16).

Through highlighting the LBN's prospective inadequacies and TJ's ability to mitigate these, TJ leaders further demonstrated an ability to manoeuvre in local politics, something which before the process of engagement (and hiring of professional consultants) they were unable to do.

Despite the focus on cohesion and the consequences of a closure of the Centre, the TJ's team also had to focus on the actual planning issues that the Inspector was to adjudicate on. One of the most significant claims made by the LBN has been that TJ has

consistently failed to submit a masterplan for the redevelopment of the site, and as a consequence stalled the regeneration of the area. This is an issue TJ in London have tried to engage with, arguing that the reason for this was the impact of London winning the Olympic Bid in 2005. As already mentioned, this transformed TJ's site from one of domestic non-significance at the edge of the metropolis to one of international importance. The specific issue with London winning the Olympic Bid was that the newly established Olympics Development Authority (ODA) had jurisdiction over a part of the site, and could have seized some of it for use as part of the Olympics (ODA 2011). Indeed, the issuing of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) on a part of the site was made in November 2005, and according to Mohammed, 'made it harder for the Trustees to progress its long-term plans for the site', now having to 'overcome hurdles placed in front of us by the Olympics' (Mohammed 2011: 10). In his verbal evidence, Mohammed commented that roughly 20 per cent of the current site came under threat of the CPO.[199] This seemed a relevant explanation of the movement's short fallings and shows that TJ leaders were able to act on advise from their hired consultants to negotiate questions at the Inquiry.

8.4.2: Karen Jones

Karen Jones, the person hired by TJ leaders to convince the Inspector that TJ have adapted, and to mitigate instances that show otherwise, gave three key reasons as to why the London TJ failed to submit a masterplan:

[199] Cross-examination of Mr. Solad Mohammed (Trustee of the Anjuman-E-Islahul-Muslimeen of London, UK), by Douglas Edwards QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, morning session.

- The supplementary planning Guidance – Lower Lea Valley Draft Planning Framework 'safeguarded' the site for a canal and road, compromising the opportunity for the Appellants to be clear about what part of the site could be developed and the overall feasibility of the development;
- An Olympics CPO was confirmed on the site in 2006. It envisaged that a proportion of the Site would be acquired to build a walkway from West Ham to the Greenway;
- The 'Financial Crisis' between 2008 and 2010 which impacted the funding available for the redevelopment of the Site. (Jones 2011: 21)

None of these reasons were because TJ is a closed or fundamentalist group that has failed to distinguish between faith matters and the ability to operate within the framework of the modern state. Of the three reasons given, the most important was the 2005 CPO on the site. Jones commented that once London had won the bid to host the Games, the advice the Trust received from the LTGDC was 'not to progress the Site's masterplan until they received further advice as...the site may be needed for part of the Olympics' (Jones 2011: 24).

The CPO on a small area of the site was issued in 2005 and confirmed in 2006. This meant that the Trust had to reconsider the way the site was to be developed. To complicate matters, there was a delay in the actual purchasing of the area, adding further uncertainty about what was going on, and it was not until 2009 that the ODA advised the Trust that in actuality the CPO would not take affect. For Jones this delay meant that:

> The accelerated programme of activity that the Appellant wished to instigate after the expiry of the 2001 planning permission for the temporary structures was not achievable, the Appellant nevertheless continued to seek to work with the Council (Jones 2011: 24).

Given the confusion over which parts of the site were available for development it meant that a masterplan was slow in emerging, although Sahadevan argued that in his "expert

and professional" opinion he could see no reason why the CPO had been a hindrance to the TJ.[200]

Douglas Edwards QC, representing the LBN, commented that the Council had never received any communication stating that the Trustees were having problems in submitting a masterplan due to the CPO, and that if the CPO was a real issue at the time why did TJ's team not relate this to the LBN or LTGDC?[201] Further to this, in his rebuttal evidence, Sahadevan challenged the assertion that TJ Trustees were told by the LTGDC not to progress with their plans, commenting: 'I contacted Andrew Gaskell [of the LDA] as part of this Inquiry, and he confirmed that this was not the case' (Sahadevan 2011b: 6). The argument advanced by Sahadevan is that only a very small proportion of the site ever came under threat by the CPO and as such a comprehensive masterplan could and should have been developed, especially given TJ's claims of having an experienced team in place, promising a masterplan application by December 2008 (Sahadevan 2011b: 6).

Sahadevan further commented that the Council had tried to "demonstrate reasonableness at every stage...finally giving the Appellants 6 months after the CPO expired in order to submit their masterplan".[202] In a response to this, Harris, informed the Inquiry that in actuality it was the most valuable part of the site that had been threatened, that is the only

[200] Cross-examination of Mr. Sunil Sahadevan (Planning Officer LBN), by Russell Harris QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 18/02/2011, morning session.
[201] Douglas Edwards QC, Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 16/02/2011, morning session.
[202] Cross-examination of Mr. Sunil Sahadevan (Planning Officer LBN), by Russell Harris QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 18/02/2011, morning session.

part of the site that had access to the public road, and as such the Trustees were keen to ensure the final outcome before proceeding.[203]

In a further effort to demonstrate how engagement had impacted upon the adaptation of the movement, Jones highlighted changes that had been made to the structure of TJ's hired team. In an answer to a question by Harris, Jones commented that the differentiating factor now is that the Appellants have a professional team that will ensure that the project is brought forward and completed on time:

> We are in a different position now...there are a number of postponements that have occurred over the past 14 years...the CPO...its been a very complex site...these would cause complications, not for us only but for any developer. There are now no obstacles in our way, and a new and active professional team has been hired...we will submit within 12 months[204]

Jones was adamant that the masterplan would emerge in the next 12 months as a failure to do so would be disastrous for the Appellants, it would in effect mean losing any goodwill left in the Council as well as being evicted from the site.[205] The new architect, Nicholas Champkins of Allies and Morrison, in a submitted Note of Evidence outlined the Trustees' desire to 'take into consideration the existing and emerging planning policies' as well as their 'discuss the aspirations shared for the site with other stakeholders, in particular with the London Borough of Newham' (Champkins 2011: 4). For the first time since the controversial Mangera mosque designs, Champkins gave an

[203] Russell Harris QC, Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 18/02/2011, morning session.
[204] Cross-examination of Miss Karen Jones (Consultant, Cushman and Wakefield), by Douglas Edwards QC, Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 16/02/2011, morning session
[205] Proposals for the redevelopment of the site emerged in February 2012, with an open exhibition of the plans being held at the Markaz Ilyas.

indication that new plans were being worked on, and that the mosque would probably 'include a maximum of two minarets' (Champkins 2011: 6).[206]

To further highlight the importance of the new team as an argument that TJ has learned from its initial attempts at engagement, Mohammed told me that, "we are really serious about making this work, we have hired the best team money can buy, we are paying them £500,000".[207] Indeed, that a movement such as TJ which ordinarily place their trust in the will of Allah to provide, have made a bold step in re-depositing some of that trust in a western and secular team. The importance of this point cannot be overestimated, for the risk in hiring a team at such expense will have to be explained to the grassroots members who will want to know why such a large amount of money has been spent on public relations when the movement has previously stressed its apolitical, non-engaging position. Despite the argument made regarding the structure of the new team, the legal experts for NC pointed to the Inspector that as a matter of fact, the majority of 'professionals' that are involved with the project now, had also been involved with the project for a number of years, including Jones, who was hired in 2007.[208] This begs the question of how much has been developed as rhetoric in order to convince the Inspector to extend the use of the current site for a further two years.

In a further bid to demonstrate the need for the extension of current use on the site to include a large mosque, and to highlight that TJ have been proactive in assessing these needs, TJ's team presented evidence to the Inquiry of a report carried out by ECORYS

[206] Indeed, one year on, in February 2012, the London TJ held an exhibition of their new plans at the Markaz Ilyas. The plans show a desire to construct a 9,500 capacity mosque with two large minarets. The plans also include a library, nature trail, visitor centre, housing and retail units (Jacobs 2012)
[207] Conversation with Mr. Mohammed of the London TJ, 9/02/11
[208] Cross-examination of Miss Karen Jones (Consultant, Cushman and Wakefield), by Mr. John Pugh-Smith, Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 17/02/2011, morning session.

UK, on behalf of the Trustees. According to the study's terms of reference, the report was to:

> Provide an independent assessment of the need for the current mosque and that this has been addressed through the consideration of three specific aspects: The availability and quality of existing and comparable facilities in Newham and close by; Current patterns of usage including the specific appeal of the mosque; Local demand driven by recent demographic trends (ECORYS 2010: 2).

The report found that there are currently 31 mosques in Newham with a combined capacity for approximately 16,000 worshippers. Of these, the largest is the Masjid Ilays Riverine Centre, and that if Enforcement was taken the combined capacity of worship spaces would drop by 3,000, 'a reduction in capacity of almost one fifth' (ECORYS 2010: 7). Through this London TJ leaders demonstrated that the current use of the site performs an important role in the makeup of faith provision for local Muslims, as well as a strong bid as to why the redevelopment of the site to include a large mosque is a necessity.

To build upon this argument, the report comments that after carrying out interviews with the largest Deobandi mosques in Newham, as well as visiting these mosques during prayer time on Fridays 'have provided clear evidence of the current capacity issues facing mosques in Newham' (ECORYS 2010: 8). This in effect would mean that if current use of the existing facilities on the Abbey Mills site were to cease then the pressures on capacity for the other mosques in Newham would worsen. The report stated that:

> There was universal agreement amongst these [other local Deobandi mosque] representatives that the Riverine Centre helps to serve increasing local demand pressure and thereby mitigate the increasing demand pressures on their already stretched facilities (ECORYS 2010: 22).

Jones, in a continuation of the themes expressed in the ECORYS report, noted that the Muslim population in Newham had increased by around 17% since the last Census in 2001, and that the current mosque provision in the Borough was inadequate for the current population. A closure of the Riverine Centre would make matters worse:

> I consider there is enough evidence to support the fact that the Centre is so unique and established as part of the network of community services provided in Newham, that its loss would be hugely harmful and would be contrary to the planning processes I have set out above [i.e. the ones discussed in policies relating to planning and community cohesion of this chapter]. Furthermore the idea that it could be located to another site...runs contrary to the resistance of the Council to lose existing facilities which it must acknowledge have become well established and at the heart of how a community functions, particularly that of an ethnic minority (Jones 2011: 64).

It is this recognition of the importance of the facilities provided by TJ, that TJ's team noted the Council have recognised through entering into a PPA with the Trustees. That the Council was willing to enter into an agreement with TJ just before the commencement of the Inquiry, take a substantial payment from them, and agree to work towards a masterplan, highlights that the Council recognise the importance of the site as well as the need to regenerate it. Had this not been the case, why would the Council enter into such an agreement? In answering this, Sahadvean informed the Inspector that if an application for a PPA is received by the Council, then the Council has to treat that application in the same way as it does any other – the PPA does not guarantee insurance of the delivery of a masterplan, only the facilitation of discussions.[209] Even so, the fact that the LBN did not await the end of the Public Inquiry to enter into a PPA with TJ, will have provided a boost of legitimacy to the claims being made by TJ and their team to the importance and significance of the site.

[209] Cross-examination of Mr. Sunil Sahadevan (Planning Officer LBN), by Russell Harris QC., Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 18/02/2011, morning session.

To end this session, the Inspector, Graham Dudley, noted that in his opinion, "the aspirations of the trustees have not changed" with regards to the desire to develop the site in a homogenously religious way. This is the Trustees' ideal outcome, it was such in 1996 when they purchased the site, and remains so today. What has changed according to Mr. Dudley's opinion is that TJ leaders have become pragmatic – "pragmatism dictates that it has to be mixed-use".[210] This is an important statement as it suggests that TJ leaders have in effect been able to put their ideal outcome as dictated by religious convictions to one side and reach a compromise for a mixed-use development, for ultimately the goal of building the mosque is paramount, and compromise is the only way to achieve it. This demonstrates that TJ leaders in London have engaged with the planning processes and that they have been able to develop their own position to reflect the demands as dictated by the local authority and planning policy.

8.5.1 The Role of Newham Concern

The third party to formally take part in the Public Inquiry was local interest group Newham Concern*,* claiming to represent the views of local residents including local Muslims, with support from a wider audience at the national level. NC states that its aim is to promote 'our capital to be a model of social harmony between our many communities' (Craig 2011b). Alan Craig has been one of the most prolific campaigners against the construction of the proposed mosque, and his genius has been to frame the issue as the "mega-mosque" project. For Craig the issue has been about ensuring the cohesion of the local community. Craig told me:

[210] Mr. Graham Dudley (Planning Inspector) Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 16/02/2011, morning session.

> I am not against mosques, nor am I against mosque building. The UK is an open and tolerant society and I respect people's right to worship what ever their faith. What I do oppose however, is this specific mosque and the people behind this mosque. The TJ are a closed and secretive sect, they discriminate against women, and if you look at their current HQ in Dewsbury, you will see that it has become a parallel society. This is something that I don't want for London.[211]

These sentiments were formally expressed in NC's Opening Statement:

> Newham Concern ("NC") is a local action group which wants London to be a model of social harmony between its many communities. It wishes to see the Abbey Mills site "regenerated" through new development. Furthermore, NC has no objection to such regeneration including provision of a modest mosque (or indeed facilities for any other faith based group) as part of a truly mixed used scheme for the site; but such uses should be beneficial to the local community and encourage social cohesion and good community relations. However, the current unlawful use of the Abbey Mills site by Tablighi Jamaat ("TJ") does not accord with these well established principles (Pugh-Smith and Deakin 2011).

NC's team wanted to highlight that TJ has not undergone a process of transformation, and that should TJ gain permission to construct their mosque then the consequences to the cohesion of the local area could be dire. NC representatives furthered this message through press releases and briefings to journalists, resulting in articles being published as far away as the *Wall Street Journal* (Craig 2011a; Bar-Hillel 2011; Butt 2011; MacDonald 2011). NC was able to call on members of the Muslim community to testify that 'TJ promotes hard-line separatism and intolerance, including of other Muslim denominations', that it is misogynistic in 'its refusal to open their current facilities to women, thereby excluding half the local community from any involvement at a stroke', and that its 'teachings run counter to the planning policy principles of social cohesion and integration which seek to underpin regeneration initiatives in East London's multi-cultural society' (Pugh-Smith and Deakin 2011). From the start of the Inquiry, NC centred its debate around cohesion, framing TJ's practises as contrary to planning policies.

[211] Alan Craig, Interview on Thursday 10 June 2010, London Newham.

NC called two witnesses to the stand – Imam Dr. Taj Hargey of the Muslim Educational Centre in Oxford and Tehmina Kazi, Director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy. The significance of these was that NC was able to challenge the sincerity of TJ, call into question their record on cohesion, and to do this with evidence from inside Muslim communities. It is important to note here that both Hargey and Kazi are known for their explicit support of Muslims integrating into the UK's secular system of governance and as such come as unsurprising opponents of TJ.

The alliance with Muslim figures such as Hargey and Kazi served to highlight that NC is not a fringe Christian group, but rather an organisation that has formed a broad base of support, voicing the concerns of many in the community. Just as TJ has tried to reframe itself as open and multicultural, so too has NC. Hargey and Kazi engaged with policies on social and community cohesion, arguing that a majority of Muslims in Britain were striving for the same goals, but that TJ was working in the opposite direction. It is here more than at any other time during the Inquiry that TJ was framed as a closed, isolationist and fundamentalist sect – demonstrating that in actuality the movement has failed to adapt to functioning within the context of modern Britain.

8.5.2 Taj Hargey and Tehmina Kazi

The aim of Hargey and Kazi was to demonstrate that even if TJ leaders have embarked upon a process of engagement, that this has not had a transformative on the movement and that the new strategy is based on empty rhetoric. Hargey noted that contrary to Mohammed's assertion that the core ideology of TJ is peace:

> One subsection pursues a non-violent struggle through conscience while a radical contingent prefers armed fighting...there is little doubt that most embrace religious interpretations that are largely indistinct from the fundamentalist Wahhabi-Salafi ideology that is the mainstay of Muslim militants (Hargey 2011: 5).

Through this Hargey re-framed TJ in a more sinister light, questioning whether an organisation that has any form of links to militant activities should be in a position to build one of Europe's largest mosques. Taking this argument further, ensuring that no doubt was left in the Inspector's mind, Hargey asserted that even though TJ adherents may not physically be involved in *jihad*, the fact that TJ leaders do not actively oppose it in their current teachings 'is indirectly lending it sustenance and succour' (Hargey 2011: 6). These comments are problematic for they do not distinguish between different forms of *jihad* nor do they take account of TJ leaders' condemnation of terrorism. Going further, Hargey made reference to Gborieau's belief that TJ's final goal is nothing short of a 'planned conquest of the world' in the spirit of proselytising jihad (Hargey 2011: 10; Gaborieau 1999: 21). Whilst this may be a long term goal of the movement, it did not bear direct relevance to the Inquiry and may have acted in favour of TJ, who were later able to dismiss Hargey's comments as extreme.

Hargey proceeded to interact with policies around cohesion arguing that TJ is constrained by its ideology in how sincere its interactions and engagements with the local authority, and indeed all non-Muslims can be:

> Since the TJ is at heart a fundamentalist movement, it embraces a conservative and undemocratic ideology. Aside from instructing its members to avoid entanglement in local politics, promoting the face masking of women, opposing coeducational schools and banning social contact with non-Muslims, TJ encourages Muslims already disenchanted with life in the west (who are searching for their identity) to disassociate from the world by pursuing a transnational, self-imagined construct that can be exploited by extremists (Hargey 2011: 14).

For Hargey, TJ have not adapted to the British context in which they find themselves, and even though their professional team may be saying all the right things at the Inquiry, the reality is that TJ is operating at a different level to that of the local authority.

In order to promote this image of TJ as out of tune with the government's aspirations for cohesive communities based on equal opportunities, Hargey stressed that TJ are 'scornful of secular democracy and Western values', that TJ see 'voluntary apartheid as not merely beneficial, but crucial' (Hargey 2011: 15). Provide evidence, Hargey referred to the case of Zubair Dudha – the Dewsbury mufti who 'tells parents that permitting their offspring to mix with non-Muslims is an evil that is bringing ruin to the holy moral fabric of Muslim society' – something that Hargey regards as culturally isolationist and as the polar opposite of integration (Hargey 2011: 15). Hargey further highlighted his fears that should the eventual construction of the mosque be allowed, it would serve to 'condition UK Muslims to divorce themselves from the mainstream to remain on the embittered edge of British society', creating a 'distinctive separate enclave, a practical apartheid-like ghetto and a parallel society' (Hargey 2011: 16-17). These are severe words, and left the Inquiry in no doubt as to some of the perceived consequences should the construction of the mosque be allowed. The Inspector, however, was not adjudicating on the proposed mosque plans, but rather whether the London TJ should be allowed to continue using their site for an extended two years.

The second witness called by NC was Tehmina Kazi, Director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy. Kazi explained that she had been called upon to "explain why TJ

doesn't promote social integration" with specific regards to women.[212] Kazi claimed that TJ are not conducive to furthering cohesion because TJ women are expected to be covered completely when out of the house, and that when they do leave the house, they are not allowed to do so without being accompanied by a close male relative.[213] Again, whilst this highlighted TJ's ethos towards women it didn't directly resonate with what the Inspector was looking for in regards to TJ's remaining on their current site for a further two years. Quoting the Government's Cohesion Delivery Framework (2010), Kazi notes that TJ is acting contrary to this document:

> The Tablighi Jamaat discourages this kind of integration into British society, especially of female members, since they essentially do not communicate with non-Muslims...Instead, female members of the Tablighi Jamaat are kept secluded, and the values surrounding this seclusion are transmitted to their children. Therefore, the female members of this movement – as well as future generations – do not integrate into mainstream British Society (Kazi 2011: 7).

This argument again, had little to do with the planning details over the illegality of the current structures on the site, but what it did was to raise concerns over the wider project. It is these arguments over cohesion, the place of women in the movement, and allegations of TJ's fundamentalist nature that were picked up by the press, and made the greatest impression to the public gallery at the Inquiry. Such comments highlight TJ as duplicitous and as having failed to adapt to the British context. Alternatively, many within the planning process go through its motions as a means to achieving their objectives irrespective of their actual intentions, and could signify that TJ leaders have recognised this. As such, the short fallings may not be on TJ leaders, but rather on the planning system. NC's argument has been that given TJ is evidently 'reluctant to engage in dialogue with people who are different' and which under normal circumstances

[212] Examination of Miss. Tehmina Kazi (Director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy) by Mr. John Pugh-Smith, Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 17/02/2010, afternoon session.
[213] Ibid

promotes 'self-segregation', the answer should be no to the extension, and certainly no to the construction of a large and iconic mosque on the site.[214]

From the TJ's perspective, despite their apparent exclusion from public life, Tablighi women are not completely secluded in their house. The movement provides opportunities for women to break with their daily lives, giving them a role not limited to bringing up children. Following in Metcalf's footsteps, Agnes de Feo spent time living with and researching Tablighi women, and notes that they strongly participate in the work of propagation of Islam as taught by TJ (Metcalf 2000; De Feo 2009). For de Feo, unlike modern Islamist movements:

> TJ does not confine women to the domestic sphere. On the contrary, according to the wishes of Ilyas and the rules established by his son Mohammad Yusuf, women are encouraged to get involved in *dawah* (De Feo 2009).

Including women in the *dawah* process gives them a new role in society, an escape from daily routine and domestic labour. Shorn of their daily burden, women obtain the responsibility for teaching, explaining, discussing, reading, and concentrating on intellectual and spiritual activities. They have learned how to preach to women, how to use gentle behaviour to convince the sisters to strengthen their faith. They are not only mothers and housewives, they spend their time in a more valued activity: preaching to other women to follow the path of Allah (De Feo 2009).

[214] Ibid

8.5.3 Questioning the TJ

As well as calling two witnesses to the stand, NC also served the function, through their legal team, of calling into question a number of different statements made to the Inquiry by TJ. They did this through cross-examining witnesses and raising formal questions throughout the process. The two main challenges from NC were concerns over the truthfulness of the evidence submitted by Mohammed and the way in which the ECORYS survey was conducted. These challenges were aimed at demonstrating that TJ in London had not yet made a lasting transformation to a group that would work within the system, but rather willing to say anything in order to convince the Inspector to adjudicate in their favour.

NC's legal team challenged the assertion that TJ had made an effort to open up to outsiders and prove that they were truly beneficial to the whole community. Mohammed's statement was that, "we welcome everyone, not just TJ, even non-Muslims, we sit and we talk with them"[215]. NC's response was that this was not true, because women were not allowed on the site. Mohammed retorted that the site is currently open to women and that on average eight women attend Friday prayers – "we always welcome women but not many turn up".[216] This is contrary to what the ECORYS report stated, as well as what the ethnographic research has shown. The argument between the two parties continued with NC arguing that in order for women to attend a separate entrance and ablution facilities must be available for them, and asked Mohammed to point to these facilities on the map of the current facilities. Mohammed

[215] Cross-examination of Mr. Solad Mohammed by Mr. John Pugh-Smith Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, morning session.
[216] Ibid

was unable to do so, but said if women did "turn up" then they would ensure that facilities would be cleared for them.

Mohammed proceeded to state that in any case, women attend the mosque on Thursday evenings when a wedding takes place – "usually six or seven weddings every month take place after the Thursday evening talks".[217] In his verbal evidence, Hargey challenged this, arguing that Tablighi weddings are traditionally segregated events, and as such women would not be expected to be at the mosque with the men – indeed, I did not see any women following the Thursday evening talks during observation research. Whilst this argument is not directly related to the specific planning arguments over whether an extension of two years for use of the current site should be granted to TJ, it serve to highlight inconsistencies with TJ's narrative, as well as raise doubts about the ability of TJ to build the proposed "mega-mosque".

In a bid to demonstrate the value of the current facilities to the local community, Mohammed highlighted that to the rear of the gatehouse there is a conference room that can be booked out by anyone – when pressed on how regularly this was booked by non-TJ members or how widely publicised the facility was, Mohammed was not able to answer. NC representatives suggested that in actuality, "the main community contribution [of the current Abbey Mills facility] is Friday prayers and Thursday evening talks", and that these were primarily for a certain strand of Muslims.[218] Mohammed replied in the affirmative. Despite all this not being directly relevant to the planning details over the proposed two-year extension for the TJ to remain on the site, it served the

[217] Ibid
[218] Mr. John Pugh-Smith (legal advisor to Newham Concern), Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, morning session.

purpose of calling into question the sincerity of TJ's engagement and commitment to social and community cohesion.

NC challenged the basis of the ECORYS report arguing that it does not reflect accurate representations of mosque provision in the area, with this argument directly playing to the question of whether TJ should be granted an extension or not. Indeed, one of the main arguments put forward by TJ has been that as the Riverine Centre currently accounts for one fifth of all mosque provision in the local community, and given that other local mosques are already at capacity, the closure of the mosque would be detrimental to the community. This has been a strong argument and one that takes into consideration the latest planning policies, which state that all members of the community should be able to feel that they are part of that community (DCLG 2010). Having a place of worship that is easily accessible in the vicinity is a part of this strategy for helping to integrate new groups into the wider community.

In light of this, Pugh-Smith asked Mohammed on the basis of his evidence that the mosque provides a valuable service to the wider community, to clarify what he meant by "wider community".[219] Mohammed included the London Boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets, Walthamstow and Hackney. This was to highlight the extent to which the Riverine Centre was integral to the lives of people further a field than Newham, however, the argument made by the LBN and NC was that the boroughs mentioned by Mohammed had large amount of mosques, and as such the impact of TJ being evicted from their current site would not be as exaggerated as claimed by TJ leaders. Moreover, as more

[219] Cross-examination of Mr. Solad Mohammed by Mr. John Pugh-Smith Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 15/02/2011, afternoon session.

than 60% of regular attendees also use another mosque at different times, the impact would be smaller still.

Once Mohammed clarified what he meant by "wider community" NC were able to call into question the ECORYS report. The report did not carry out an assessment of mosque provision in any of the boroughs mentioned by Mohammed other than Newham, choosing instead to look at the sub-district of Silvertown just past Canning Town, east of Newham where very few Muslims live and where there are few provision for Muslims. Questions were raised as to why Silvertown was investigated but not Tower Hamlets, which is just as close in proximity to the Riverine Centre and, which has more mosques than any other borough in London. This served to show some of the inbuilt biases of the survey, as well as to challenge the argument that the continued use of the site was absolutely essential for the community.

NC were able to close their submission through highlighting that they were in agreement with the LBN that the consequences of allowing TJ to remain on the current site for an extended two years, would have disastrous consequences for cohesion and regeneration of the local community. That TJ as a movement are secretive, fundamentalist and operating counter to the basic principles and values of British society.[220] For NC, TJ were not genuinely engaging and that talk of the adaptation of the movement was empty rhetoric, a mere strategy to achieve TJ objectives.

[220] Mr. Andrew Deakin (Legal advisor to Newham Concern) Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 1/03/2011, Morning session.

Following NC's evidence, TJ's legal team were given the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses or raise questions that they had regarding the evidence. Rather than engaging with evidence submitted by NC, the TJ's legal team decided not to ask any questions, or even challenge anything that had been said. The presumption is that due to the evidence being so clearly against TJ there was no point in becoming entangled in a non-productive dialogue, hoping that the Inspector would not directly apply what he heard to the specific planning issues.

8.6 Inquiry Outcome

The Public Inquiry into the Appeal of Enforcement Action over the Abbey Mills Site was the single most important event to date in the history of TJ in Britain. For the first time in the London TJ's history its leaders had to engage in a public and official way in order to frame the movement as open, dynamic and in tune with modern Britain, but also more importantly, to defend its right to remain on the current site. That senior members of the London TJ attended the Inquiry in person, took to the stand to give evidence, and hired one of the most able and expensive teams to assist them throughout the proceedings highlights the extent of the importance they ascribed to the Inquiry and to public engagement as a whole.

This has been an immense transformation in the way the movement operates in Britain. The Inquiry has also been of importance to the LBN who brought the case against TJ, as well as NC who wanted to see the whole project brought to a stop, with the land being used for a different purpose that would benefit the whole of the community. All three

sides invested much time, money and effort in the process, and at the end of the Inquiry had to wait for three months before hearing the outcome.

On 23 May 2011, Dudley announced his decision. Dudley wrote 'I allow the appeal, and direct that the enforcement notice be quashed' (Dudley 2011: 2) translating into a victory for TJ. This does not mean that TJ have been granted permission to build their new mosque, but rather allowed to remain on the current site for a further two years in which time they must submit a separate plan for the re-development of the site. Despite all three main actors at the Inquiry devoting time and effort on issues of social and community cohesion, Dudley's decision was primarily based on 'hard' planning factors such as congestion, sustainability, traffic, noise and environmental factors. Even though TJ, the LBN and NC may have been using the Inquiry as a foil to draw out the wider arguments for and against the project as a whole, for the Inspector what mattered most were issues of planning relating to specific elements of the appeal. However, not totally dismissing the arguments around cohesion (although possibly misinterpreting them) Dudley took a part of NC's own evidence commenting:

> Newham Concern considers that the weight to be afforded to the need for the premises should be considered in the light of what they say are isolationist principles and teachings. Dr Hargey noted in his evidence that when he attended Thursday evening prayers he was made welcome and was not questioned about where he was from or what he was doing there. He explained that to ensure people with different languages are catered for there are different areas where many different languages are spoken or translated. The ECORYs study shows the very wide ethnicity range of attendees. The appellant indicated that there is a regular attendance of a small number non Moslems who are made welcome (Dudley 2011: 15).

This was to indicate that despite Hargey's assertions of TJ being isolationist, his own experiences of the movement have proven to the contrary. Dudley did however concede that the current set up of the mosque was failing to meet the full standards of inclusivity, especially concerning the representation of women, although it was recognised that TJ

had indicated that this would be corrected with any future construction. Noting the important role that the current TJ mosque has to play in the area, Dudley said:

> The appellant has purchased this land, set up the temporary mosque and there are very large numbers of users that come to the facility and I attach substantial weight to the benefits provided by the current use. Because it has become established in this area, the forced relocation of the mosque would inevitably hit the current usage and harm users. The overall use may well recover in time, with a build up of users from the area located to, but there would inevitably be considerable disruption to the use should it be forced to move and I attach considerable weight to this (Dudley 2011: 15).

Importantly, Dudley also commented that in his opinion TJ were a movement that had recognised the importance of being practical and were willing to compromise on some of their original intentions. Dudley noted that despite TJ leaders claiming they were always in favour of a mixed-use development, the facts show that 'in the past the appellant has consistently not accepted the need for a mixed use at the site, but wants to redevelop the site with mainly faith based uses' and that 'even this year the appellant in correspondence sent to the LTGDC indicated that it still wants to see the site used as a religious and community complex' (Dudley 2011: 17). Dudley further commented that:

> It is my view that this remains the aspiration of the appellant, but in the light of the weight of the policy documentation requiring a mixed use for the site, the appellant has reluctantly accepted that the mainly single use sought would not be achievable at the appeal site.

The TJ's recognition that the Council would reject any single use religious development has meant that even though TJ may not like the idea of a mixed-use development they have agreed to it, realising that this is the only way in which the proposals can proceed. It is the case, then, that even during the Inquiry, TJ were still on a journey of change – with the Inquiry itself acting as a catalyst. Through having been forced to engage as a result of prospective enforcement action, TJ leaders came to realise what the planning policy expected of them and that if they failed to deliver on this, then their objective of constructing the new mosque would fail. TJ leaders awoke to the realisation that the only

way to successfully negotiate the planning system is through playing by the rules of the process, and this is what TJ leaders committed to.

Despite the outcome seeming positive for TJ, the 'victory' is not without its constraints. As part of the decision to grant TJ permission to remain on the site for a further two years, Dudley imposed a series of conditions (Appendix 1), which if TJ fails to meet could mean the decision being over turned and any aspirations of a new mosque being quashed. These conditions range from controlling the level of noise on the site to replanting any trees that may die during this period. In fact many of the conditions may prove costly and time consuming for the movement (Dudley 2011: 21):

> A condition requiring an ecological buffer zone is necessary to safeguard the environment by the river and to mitigate the harm of the buildings in relation to the character and appearance of the area.
>
> A condition requiring structural repairs of the building is necessary to ensure the safety of occupiers and a condition relating to accessibility for people with disabilities is necessary to ensure the building meets their reasonable needs.

Should TJ adequately fulfil the conditions as outlined by the inspector and deliver a masterplan for a genuinely mixed-use development on time, then the movement may prove that it is ready to become an active member of the community. It goes without saying that the next two years will be interesting not only for TJ in London, but also for the wider movement which may view continued efforts to engage with caution and trepidation. What is clear is that whatever the eventual case may be, the TJ has now made its intentions clear in an official and public Inquiry, and as such should be held to account.

The importance of this chapter has been in demonstrating how and why TJ leaders decided to engage in London at the Public Inquiry as well as the effects this has had on

the London movement. It is clear that through having been pressured into engaging with the local authority and its opponents, TJ leaders began to realise why their previous approaches had failed as well as what was now expected of them. TJ leaders became socialised in the ways of the planning process, and with advise from their hired team learned how to begin to negotiate the system. It was only at the Inquiry that TJ leaders crystallised within their own minds that the only way to negotiate the planning system is through playing by its rules.

9. Conclusions

July 2005 saw two events in Britain that transformed the national context, with an especially large impact on London, setting the political agenda for the foreseeable future. These two events were Britain's winning bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games in London followed by terrorist attacks the next day on 7 July, on London's public transport system (BBC 2005). Islam, the religion of the bombers underwent a rapid process of securitisation and Muslim communities came to be viewed with suspicion. Multiculturalism, which was then the favoured policy for integrating minorities was perceived by many as having failed, and that in its place should be an emphasis on social and community cohesion. This new context had unprecedented ramifications for London branch of the TJ. The London TJ's attempts to construct what would be Britain's largest mosque only a short distance from the planned Olympics stadium became one of the most contested architectural projects in recent history. Over 2,500 individuals signed a Downing Street E-Petition against the mosque with further petitions against the project from Newham Muslims (BBC 2007). Until 2007 London TJ leaders remained passive in explaining and defending their project, allowing their opponents to define them and their proposed construction as counter to community cohesion. This was to change when London TJ leaders began the process of engaging.

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine why the TJ in London decided to embark upon socio-political engagement, and the extent to which this had a transformative impact on the movement. Through situating TJ in post 7/7 contexts, the thesis expounds that for TJ in London to achieve its objectives it will have to undergo a process of adaptation. The securitisation of Islam meant that Islamic organisations wishing to make claims on public space could not do so from a position of isolationism, but are expected

to demonstrate a knowledge and articulation of the planning system and that they are open, tolerant and engaged with wider communities. TJ leaders in London had little option but to embark upon this process – not to do so would have been disastrous for the movement and the project.

The concept of adaptation has been central to this thesis. It has been argued that the TJ is an organisation that is adept at adaptation; that movement leaders in London have shown this through attempting to transform their modes of operation as a means of gaining permission to construct their proposed mosque. Adaptation in the context of this thesis was defined as 'a process of change made by a group or population in its interaction with its environment that enhances its survival and continuation' (Barger and Ernesto 1994: 11). The survival and expansion of the movement, as well as the goal of gaining permission to construct their new mosque has been the driving faction of TJ in London – with leaders willing to do what it takes in order to construct the mosque and advance the movement.

The inherent tension in this thesis is that TJ as a movement has traditionally eschewed interaction with non-Muslims claiming to be a religious and apolitical organisation, yet the evidence gathered shows an instrumentally aware leadership, and a movement that can politically mobilise when the context demands it. Whilst TJ in London maintains close links with the global movement in Nizamuddin, it has also forged a level of independence. It is clear that the expressed preference from Nizamuddin is for TJ branches to remain apolitical and drawing as little media attention as possible. For TJ in London this strategy was no longer viable. Its leaders decided that a more political approach was necessary and despite the controversial nature of the decision within the

movement, continued to enact it. The London TJ since 2005 has gradually embarked on a process of socio-political engagement attempting to demonstrate its openness, tolerance and willingness to work with the local authority and wider community to (re)develop their site.

TJ as a movement in London was presented as having remained faithful to traditional Tablighi ideologies. Its main concern is, and always has been the eternal – working towards the complete re-orientation of life to the exact imitation of Mohammad and the early generation of Muslims - 'living like the pious ancestors' as a means of salvation (Reetz 2003; Gugler 2007). Movement leaders, through the Thursday *bayans,* instructed adherents to abstain from the affairs of this world, to focus on piety, self-reformation, invitation of others to Islam and ultimately salvation. Although this was the message imparted to grassroots adherents, elite and instrumentally aware leaders realised that they would need to pursue a different strategy – one that grassroots members were largely shielded from. In the context of modern Britain, with concerns over Islamic terrorism and the pressures surrounding its proposals, TJ leaders become attune to the 'here' through engaging with the secular. TJ leaders and activists in London were caught between "here and eternity", a movement teaching its members to eschew interaction with worldliness, but whose leaders had to adapt to the practicalities of new contexts, in which they had to negotiate the here. TJ leaders in London were adept at reinterpreting traditional ideologies and realising that abiding by the planning process irrespective of personal beliefs is the only way to succeed in their goal – a goal that they believe will eventually mitigate any effects of interaction with worldliness.

The concept of engagement remained important throughout the thesis and its discussions on the transformation of TJ. Philip Lewis' argument that engagement has a profound effect on the way Muslim communities integrate into Western societies was witnessed as part of this study. Requests for recognition, as Lewis writes, often cause contestation, but this contestation should be seen as a positive sign, for it signals that the process of negotiating a group's adaptation to a new society has begun (Lewis 2012). This has been the case with TJ's project in London. The proposals to construct a large new mosque in West Ham sparked mass contestation, which eventually forced Tablighi leaders to engage. It is this process that precipitated the greatest transformation in the movement, for with it came the understanding of how TJ leaders were expected to act within the planning system. Engagement allowed for a socialisation of TJ leaders in to the rules of interacting with governmental institutions as well as an increased confidence in responding to criticisms about the project.

Through the process of engagement TJ leaders in London have been socialised into the expectations of the planning system allowing them to modify their modes of operation in accordance with these rules. Through sustained interaction with the local authority and wider community, TJ leaders in London realised that if they are to succeed in their ambitions in a liberal democracy, then playing by the rules of the game is a necessity. The thesis predicts that if TJ leaders are held accountable to promises made at the Public Inquiry and if they continue engaging, in the long term the London TJ may be able to make a lasting adaptation. The London TJ's efforts to engage through a socio-political process underlie the TJ's ability to think globally yet act locally. This has been important because as Jacobson notes, 'movements can generate an Achilles heal when they do not

integrate the local concerns intricately into their universal symbolic webbing' (Jacobson 2011).

TJ's ability to adapt depending on local contexts was further highlighted when looking at the way TJ operates between London and Dewsbury. In Dewsbury, where the Tablighis' UK and European headquarter mosque is based, and where there is a large South Asian and Deobandi community, the context affecting the movement has been very different to the one TJ leaders have to negotiate in London. In Dewsbury the area around the TJ's mosque is dominated by Tablighis, there has been less pressure for TJ to develop a strategy of engagement, and as such the movement has been content in following a traditional Tablighi strategy – that of remaining apart. In London this has not been an option. The pressures following 7/7 and the location of TJ's proposed mosque near to the Olympics Park has meant there has been intense scrutiny of the project, as well as pressure placed on TJ leaders to comply with both planning policies and wider policies around cohesion. TJ leaders in London have had to ensure that the movement adapts, or at least be seen to adapt, or see their project fail. Although engagement may have initially been a means to an end, an instrumental strategy to allow the project to progress – TJ leaders may not have anticipated the impact of sustained interaction with the 'other'.

It is important to note that many of the strategies used by TJ leaders are also typical of those used by other Muslim groups in similar situations. Attempts by Muslim organisations to construct mosques in New York (Rabinowitz 2010), Cologne (Reimann 2007), Berlin (Jonker 2005) and Paris (Cesari 2005) highlight such similarities. These include attempts at entering the arena of social and political engagement, public relations, and actively demonstrating that Islam is not a religion of violence, but that Muslims seek

to live in peace with their neighbours and value the freedom to practice their faith just as any other faith group in society. Movements are capable of identifying strategies that have been successful in similar cases to their own, adapting them and using them for their own benefit. Strategies used by the London TJ may in turn be internalised, adapted and used by other branches of the TJ if they find themselves in similar contextual situations.

It was once TJ leaders in London made the fundamental decision of accepting that if they are to succeed in their goals in London, then a strategy of engaging by the rules and expectations of western political systems are paramount. This realisation had a transformative effect on movement leaders in London, for with it came the tools to engineering the movement's future success. Through engaging, the TJ and other Muslim groups have started to be socialised into the expectations of western systems and have come to understand that adopting a strategy of practicality and finding compromise is important. It is Tablighi leaders in London who want a recognition of their faith in the public space, even if it comes at the cost of contention, that have propelled the project, and as a consequence initiated the process of the movement's adaptation, even though this was not the intended outcome.

The London TJ's supposed new commitment to the process of engagement was crystalised at the Public Inquiry into the 'Appeal Against Enforcement Action over the Abbey Mills Riverine Centre' by TJ. Until this time, TJ leaders still hoped that they would be allowed to develop their project according to their own needs and specifications. Engagement until then was seen more as a PR tactic, a process to counter opposition, and to demonstrate that TJ was willing to go through the same motions as

anyone else wanting to build a large structure. At the Inquiry TJ leaders awoke to the need of being practical – it was that or risk the collapse of the entire project. In reality TJ leaders were forced to place personal beliefs to one side and agree to work with the local authority to develop a site that would be mixed-use. The site would still include a mosque as the central feature, but was to have facilities that would benefit the wider community. In February 2012, plans for the redevelopment of the site were released, showing that the site would include retail and housing units, a nature trail, library and mosque. Although it is still not known how *genuinely* mixed-use the facilities will be (what sort of books will be in the library, will the shop be exclusively *halal* produce), this is a positive indication from TJ that they are taking the planning regulations seriously.

TJ in London have demonstrated their adaptability through showing they have understood what local authorities and planning inspectors want with regards to planning policy, and that they are working towards that. At the same time, on a different level, they had to reassure their adherents that they are remaining faithful to the fundamental tenants of the faith, which in some ways can seem contradictory to the aims and objectives of the local authority and planning bodies, but which at the same time allow for a growth at the grass roots level of a movement. TJ leaders acknowledge that without the correct paperwork, without public relations, without the goodwill and partnership of the local authority and community, their application is unlikely to succeed. It is necessary to play by the rules that have been established. This however does not mean that faith in Allah has been abandoned, it is merely the recognition that Allah can work in different ways, and that means are not ends in themselves – indeed, once the mosque is constructed, then the real work of Tabligh in London can begin.

The Planning Inspector, Graham Dudley, captured the reality of the TJ's situation. "The aspirations of the trustees have not changed" the ideal outcome with regards to the development of the site, is it was such in 1996 when they purchased the site, and remains so today. What has changed according to Dudley is that the TJ have become pragmatic – "pragmatism dictates that it [the redevelopment] has to be mixed use".[221] This is important as it suggests that TJ leaders in London have in effect been able to put their ideal outcome as dictated by religious convictions to one side and reach a compromise for a mixed-use development of the site. Ultimately the goal of building the mosque is paramount, and compromise is the only way to achieve it. This demonstrates that the London TJ have engaged with the planning processes and able to develop their own position to reflect the demands as dictated by the local authority and planning policy. Indeed, if TJ as a movement recognise the importance of adapting to local contexts and use innovative methods as a means to an end, as it seems they are, then it is likely that the movement will go from strength to strength.

Ultimately TJ is a movement that is adept to adapting. Drawing on, and reframing its traditions, in order to resonate with the wider community the movement in London has sought to prove that it is willing and able to "play by the rules of the game". It should of course be considered that the recent adaptations in the London TJ's modes of operation are a temporary and strategic shift in order to attain the goal of mosque construction. Many movements and organisations in the past have said what was needed in order to achieve goals, only to revert to their original practices once attained. Indeed, TJ as with others, may have learned to play the system rather than abide by the system. At the same

[221] Mr. Graham Dudley (Planning Inspector) Public Inquiry into the Enforcement Action at the site of the Abbey Mills Centre, East Ham Town Hall, London Borough of Newham, 16/02/2011, morning session.

time, however, ideological positions initially staked out as a form of democratic posturing can eventually metamorphose into actual convictions. As Wickham states:

> Strategic moderation triggers changes in the public rhetoric and behavior of political actors that, when reiterated and defended over time, can produce change in their ultimate goals. To borrow Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph's felicitous phrase, "the mask becomes the face"" (Wickham 2004: 225).

As with all rational actors, the London TJ has emerged as a practical organisation, a movement that has put its survival and expansion before all else. Through engagement, a process TJ has seen as a necessary evil, the movement in London hopes to gain permission to construct its new mosque – an achievement mitigating many of the problematic features of engaging with the secular. While the thesis presents evidence of past tentative engagement by London TJ leaders, it cannot predict whether this will lead to a genuine transformation of the organisation, nor indeed whether it will continue in community engagement. It can only suggest that it may do so. Engagement is a powerful process and if held to account, TJ may have no option but to continue in its adaptation.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Terms of Conditions imposed on the TJ by the Planning Inspector Appeal Decision APP/G5750/C/10/2125895

Conditions

i. The planning permission shall be for a limited period, expiring two years after the date of this permission. Upon expiry of the permission the use shall cease and the buildings hatched red on drawing 5061.11 shall be removed. Three months before the expiry date of the planning permission, a land reinstatement scheme, including a timetable for the reinstatement scheme, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The reinstatement shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and associated timetable.

ii. No amplification equipment shall be used for the purposes of, or in association with, the use hereby permitted.

iii. Within six weeks of the grant of planning permission, a Crowd Marshalling Code of Conduct Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The statement shall set out in detail how noise and other disturbances emanating from the use shall be mitigated and controlled, including the deployment of stewards to control noise and other disturbances generated by the congregation coming to and leaving the site. The statement shall be implemented within one month of the date of its approval and thereafter the use shall be carried out in accordance with the approved statement.

iv. The use hereby approved shall take place only within the land shown on drawing number 5061/02D. There shall be no access (whether by foot, cycle, car or any other means) in connection with the use to any areas within the site other than in accordance with the Site Management Plan.

v. Within one month of the grant of planning permission a scheme for the provision and management of a buffer zone alongside the Channelsea River (The Ecological Buffer Zone Scheme) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented within three months of the date of scheme approval

and thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme. The scheme shall include:

a. Plans showing the extent and layout of the buffer zone

b. Details of the planting scheme which is to include locally native species

c. Details demonstrating how the buffer zone will be protected during the use of the development and managed/maintained over the longer term

d. Details of any footpaths, fencing and lighting

e. Details of the specifications and sources of soils to be imported for the purposes of the buffer zone

vi. Within one month of the grant of planning permission, a scheme for the monitoring of air quality within the existing buildings, including the installation of dedicated mercury monitoring equipment, monitoring within the ablution areas and a timetable for monitoring and implementation (The Air Quality Monitoring Scheme) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and associated monitoring and implementation timetable.

vii. In the event that contamination likely to cause harm (defined as air quality mercury concentrations exceeding 1Ng/m3 in accordance with the World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines for Europe, Second Edition, 2000) to the users of the development is identified during the air quality monitoring associated with Condition vi, the use of any such area will be suspended. The use will be suspended in this area until a scheme, which shall include any necessary mitigation works and a timetable for their implementation (The Unexpected Contamination Scheme), has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority and thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

viii. A visual assessment of the physical integrity of the vapour membrane shall be completed every three months from the date of the planning permission by a suitably qualified person or company and the results provided to the planning authority. Should this inspection reveal defects with the physical integrity of the membrane, such defects will be repaired within one month of the inspection and written confirmation provided to the planning authority.

ix. The 40 cycle parking spaces shown on drawing number 04148/07 Rev A will be installed within two months of the grant of planning permission. The cycle spaces shall be provided and be available at all times for users of the development.

x. Within one month of the grant of planning permission, a travel plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The travel plan shall be implemented within one month of the date of approval and thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved travel plan.

xi. All vehicles parked on the site shall only park within the area of hardstanding shown edged red on drawing number 04148/07 Rev A.

xii. The number of vehicles parked upon the area of hardstanding shown edged red on drawing number 04148/07 Rev A shall not exceed the following maximum numbers:

a. 280 vehicles – any Thursday between 18.00 and 23.00

b. 200 vehicles – any Friday between 11.00 and 15.00

c. 100 vehicles – at any other time

xiii. Within two months of the grant of planning permission, the works set out in drawing numbers SK01 Rev C; SK02 Rev A; SK03 Rev A; SK04 Rev A; SK05 Rev B; SK06 and SK07 shall be carried out and access shall be provided to the council during this period in order to inspect the existing foundation trial pit excavations. Should this inspection reveal the need for any additional works in relation to ensuring public safety within the buildings, a scheme for these works, including a timetable for their implementation (The Additional Repair Works Scheme) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and associated timetable. Works shall be maintained in a serviceable condition for the duration of the permission.

xiv. Within one month of the grant of planning permission, a plan showing the proposed hard and soft landscape improvement scheme (The Landscaping Improvement Scheme) generally consistent with that shown on drawing numbers 043943-014H and 043943–015A shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall include:

a. A clear landscape strategy setting out the parameters being addressed and how they are to be achieved.

b. Full details of plants and trees.

c. Maintenance schedule

d. Full details of all hard elements including planters

e. Full details of the ivy panel wall

xv. The landscaping improvement scheme shall be implemented within three months of the date of its approval.

xvi. Any plants or trees that die or are removed, damaged or diseased within the first year shall be replaced to the satisfaction of the planning authority in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species.

xvii. Within one month of the grant of planning permission, full details of any painting and / or rendering that will be applied to the buildings (The Painting Scheme) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented within two months of the date of the details being approved.

xviii. Within one month of the grant of planning permission, a plan showing the accessibility works and their maintenance for the duration of the permission (The accessibility Works Plan) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The accessibility works and their maintenance shall be implemented in accordance with the plan within one month of the date of their approval.

xix. Within one month of the grant of planning permission, the Initial Energy and Sustainability Management Strategy (7th December 2010) shall be implemented and thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the strategy.

xx. The development hereby permitted shall cease and the buildings and hardstandings identified in the enforcement notice shall be removed within one month of the date of the failure *to meet any one of the requirements set out below:*-, in relation to conditions iii, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xv, xvi, xvii, xviii, xix and xx.

a. Compliance with the conditions and associated timetable.

b. If within 6 months of the date of this decision the local planning authority refuse to approve the submitted details or fail to give a decision within the prescribed period, an appeal shall have been made to, and accepted as validly made by, the Secretary of State.

c. If an appeal is made in pursuance of (b) above, that appeal shall have been finally determined and the submitted scheme shall have been approved by the Secretary of State.

d. The approved scheme shall have been carried out and completed in accordance with the approved timetable.

Appendix 2

A description of time spent on the path of Allah (ref. http://abooali.wordpress.com/chapter-2/)

I had never been to Leeds and consoled myself with the thought that at least I'd be visiting somewhere new. But apart from the mosque I saw very little of Leeds. For the next fourteen days we ate, slept and prayed in the mosque. I was given a sleeping bag and ill-fitting cotton Shalwar Kameez (long shirt and baggy trousers). At meal times long rolls of paper were laid down and curry and chapattis were provided, cooked in rotation by the members of our group, though they only gave me washing-up duty.

We were told not to discuss politics or areas of religious dispute. We were even discouraged from discussing the meaning of the Qur'an. On one occasion I was sitting with a brother, trying to explain some of the Arabic words to him, when I was told to stop. "You shouldn't give Tafseer (meaning of the Qur'an) unless you are a scholar," said the brother. "Just learn by heart the Suras the Maulana taught us." "But then we'll be reciting words we don't understand?" I complained. "It doesn't matter. You will benefit from your recitation!"

I found it difficult to see how one could benefit from reciting words without understanding their meaning, but I soon learnt that the act itself was considered a form of worship that would confer blessings upon those who engaged in it. As a result memorization of the Qur'an without understanding it is very common amongst Muslims, particularly those from non-Arabic speaking countries. (Even those from Arabic speaking countries have problems understanding the archaic language of the Qur'an.) The majority of those with me in the Leeds Mosque were of Pakistani or Indian origin, and although they had memorized huge passages and in some cases the whole of the Qur'an, few could understand a word. Memorizing the Qur'an is not as difficult as it may seem. The language of the Qur'an has a poetic rhythm with repeated phrases and patterns, such as beginning a sentence with "Qul!" (Say!) or ending it with two adjectives of God. Certain stories about past prophets or parables about believers and unbelievers are re-visited throughout the Qur'an, so that a sequence one has already memorized will occur in a similar form elsewhere. Children are also taught to read the Qur'an from a very

young age – as soon as they can imitate sounds in some cases – and families hold a celebration called a Khatam (completion) once their son or daughter has read the whole Qur'an. I memorized the last Juz' (1/30th of the Qur'an), which are the short Suras (chapters) at the end of the Qur'an and which are most commonly used in daily prayers. I also learnt several other important Suras and verses such as the last three verses of al-Baqara and al Kahf and "The Verse of Throne" and Suras such as "Yaseen" and "Al-Rahman." Fortunately my studies at SOAS helped me to learn the meaning of what I was memorizing.

There was one book we were encouraged to understand. It was called "The Teachings of Islam" by Maulana Zakarya Kandhlwi, a large volume badly printed on cheap paper and bound in a gaudy red plastic. We were all given our very own copy and told to study it when we were not engaged in prayers or listening to talks. This book was the source of many of the lectures I heard at the Dewsbury Mosque and over the coming days in Leeds. It related stories of the Prophet and his companions and quoted passages of the Qur'an. The emphasis was on reaching the utmost state of piety, abstinence and fear of God. At first I found many of the stories strange and disconnected from the society around me.

One story began with the heading *"The Prophet Reprimands the companions for Laughing."* It read:

"Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to the Mosque for prayer where he noticed some people laughing and giggling. He remarked: 'If you remembered your death I would not see you like this. Remember your death often. Not a single day passes when the grave does not call out: 'I am a wilderness' 'I am a place of dust' 'I am a place of insects'. When a believer is laid in the grave it says; 'Welcome to you. Very good of you to have come into me. Of all the people walking on the earth I liked you the best. Now that you have come into me, you will see how I entertain you.' It then expands as far as the occupant can see. A door from Paradise is opened for him in the grave and through this door he gets the fresh and fragrant air of Paradise. But when an evil man is laid in the grave it says; 'No word of welcome for you. Your coming into me is very bad for you. Of all the persons walking on earth I dislike you the most. Now that you have been made over to me, you will see how I treat you!' It then closes upon him so much so that his ribs of one side penetrate into the ribs of the other. As many as 70 serpents are then set on him to keep biting him till the day of resurrection."

The author explains the purpose of the book in the forward:

"Muslim mothers, while going to bed at night, instead of telling myths and fables to their children, may narrate to them such real and true tales of the golden age of Islam that may create in them an Islamic spirit of love and esteem for the Sahabah and thereby improve their faith and that it may be a useful substitute for the current story books."

The more I read the more acclimatized I became to the mindset of seventh century Arabia. After several days of confinement in the mosque and a constant routine of talks, prayers and readings from this book, I was so immersed in the events of the early Muslims that I began to feel estranged from what I now regarded as the sinful world around me. But in spite of it's sinfulness, the Amir regularly ordered expeditions to this very world. Each day he chose a group of three people to visit an address on a list collected by brothers beforehand. These addresses were those of local Muslims who for one reason or another were believed to be in need of "Da'wa" – in other words bringing back into the fold of Islam. I was a little anxious when finally chosen to join a group.

The Amir gave us very specific rules regarding our conduct outside. We were not to look around at all the Haram (forbidden) things around us. We were to keep our eyes lowered at the ground, a couple of yards ahead of us and repeat a little prayer to ourselves. This made it a little difficult to follow the directions, to negotiate busy streets and cross roads. Eventually we turned up un-announced at the house. A short clean shaven young Asian let us in and offered us some food and drink, which we politely turned down, as instructed beforehand, in case this reprobate had used forbidden ingredients such as gelatine, non-halal meat, or alcohol in his cooking. We sat gingerly on the edge of his sofa, as our leader – a leader of every group was always appointed – repeated the talks about death and the Day of Judgment and other stirring stories from the big red book. We beseeched the stray brother to come to the mosque to listen to our Amir. Eventually he agreed to join us for afternoon prayer. Mission accomplished, we carefully made our way back.

I began slipping into a very obsessive mindset. Even the most minute rituals and practices of the Prophet took on extraordinary and exaggerated importance that must be followed if I was to avoid the fires of Hell, while all other matters of life seemed irrelevant. "We should never think we are in any way more advanced than the Prophet was," said the Amir. "Everything he did was the best example for us. Even when we

travel by car or plane we should remember that travelling by camel or donkey is better, because that is the way the Prophet did it." Copying the Prophet included the way we brushed our teeth, and our Amir gave us a talk about the importance of using the Miswak, a twig from a type of tree found in the Middle East. He related the saying of the Prophet; "Was it not for my fear of imposing a difficulty on my nation I would have ordered that the Miswak be used before every prayer." He then produced a Miswak and demonstrated how it should be used, stripping off the bark from the tip and chewing it until it was frayed. He then rubbed it against his teeth from side to side. When he had finished he told us a story from the time of Omar, the second Caliph of Islam.

"During the conquest of Egypt, the Muslim army was having great difficulty in defeating the enemy. When Omar heard of this he said it must be because of a deed they have committed. So the Muslim fighters asked themselves if they were neglecting any religious duty, but they found they were not. Then they asked themselves if they had neglected any Sunnah (practice of the Prophet) and they discovered that they had forgotten to brush their teeth using the Miswak. So they got together and started using the Miswak. Once the enemy saw this they thought the Muslims were preparing to eat them alive and fled."

Every second of my day was now controlled and defined by this or that Sunnah. When going to the toilet I was taught to clean myself in a certain way and utter a prayer when entering and leaving the toilet. Islam even regulated the way I slept, and on my second night I was rebuked by the Amir for sleeping the wrong way. He explained that a Muslim should never sleep with his feet pointing towards Mecca but should always sleep facing it. I wasn't quite sure if he meant only that my head should be pointing towards Mecca or whether I should be literally facing Mecca. To be on the safe side I kept my face in the direction of Mecca and prevented myself from turning side to side as I normally did, which made it very uncomfortable and difficult to sleep.

I became increasingly concerned that such a high level of attention to form and detail was not sustainable outside the sheltered environment of the mosque and worried about my salvation if I was unable to maintain it. But it was difficult to voice this concern in an atmosphere where group mentality strongly disapproved of any failure to live up to the standards set. The Maulana seemed to take pride in how hard and difficult it was to practise Islam properly and said that Prophet Muhammad had said:

“A time will come upon people wherein the one steadfast to his religion will be like one holding a burning coal.”

The sheikh explained that in this day and age to be a good Muslim is like clasping hold of a red hot piece of coal. One instinctively wants to throw it away, but one must resist the instinct and grab it tightly if one wants to achieve Paradise and avoid Hell. A ‘true’ Muslim had to sacrifice the comforts and pleasures of the world for austerity and hardship if he was to gain the comforts and pleasures of paradise. He must expect to be thought of as a weird and strange by non-Muslims and suffer ridicule from the society around him, as the prophet said:

“Islam began as something strange, and it will revert to being strange as it was in the beginning, so good tidings for the strangers.” Someone asked, “Who are the strangers?” The Prophet replied, “The ones who break away from their people for the sake of Islam.”

Although I had only been at the mosque in Leeds for two weeks, it seemed much longer, and when we got back to Dewsbury I felt disoriented and apprehensive about returning to ‘the real world’ with its evil temptations ready to entice me away from God. I looked for Shafiq, but he hadn’t returned. It was during Ramadan, and we had been fasting all day. At sunset everyone broke their fast together in Dewsbury mosque. I was starving, and the curry and chapattis never tasted so good.

As soon as we had finished eating the talks started up again. I decided to nip outside for some fresh air. When I got outside I saw there were about fifteen or twenty men standing in a long line around the back wall of the mosque. They had all sneaked outside to have a quiet cigarette. This was their first cigarette after a long day of fasting and many were dizzy from the sudden nicotine rush, and as a result they slurred their ‘Salams’ as they glanced at me sheepishly with glazed eyes. Although I had been a smoker myself not so long ago, I now felt it was very ‘un-Islamic’ and I strongly disapproved. The fact that many had long beards and large turbans increased my indignation. But at the same time there was a part of me that seemed to take comfort in the fact that there were practicing Muslims who were less than perfect. It made me feel better about the possibility that I might fall short of being a ‘perfect Muslim’ myself.

I was delighted to finally see Shafiq the next day. I wanted to know if he had been through a similar experience as me and whether he too felt worried about some of the

things he had heard. But he looked relaxed and un-phased by his experiences and told me how wonderful it had been and how he could not wait to go out on his next Jamaat. I was relieved to get back home. I felt a little nervous. Things looked different. My priorities had shifted. I was less concerned about this life and far more focused on the next life. I grew my beard, wore a long white Jilbab and cap. I not only prayed all the compulsory prayers, but I prayed all the extra prayers, too. I began fasting every Monday and, of course, always brushed my teeth with a Miswak. I was also determined to keep in my mind that heightened state of fear of God that I had felt in the mosque. My friends and family were at first a little surprised by the even more devoutly religious Hassan, and humoured my somewhat obsessive attention to every tiny detail of Islam. However I soon found that being back in the 'real world' gave me a more balanced perspective and the sense of anxiety and fear gradually subsided as I realised that Jamaatu Tableegh's obsession with form and ritual was a distorted perception of Islam. I came to appreciate what the Qur'an said, that "God does not task a soul beyond what it can bear," and that the needs of this world and the needs of the next world did not have to be in conflict. I began to seek a more sophisticated and deeper appreciation of Islam than Jamaatu-Tableegh offered.

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